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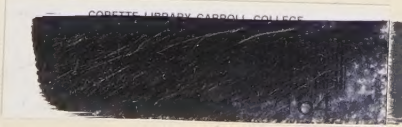

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THE HISTORY OF LORD LYTTON'S INDIAN ADMINISTRATION

1876–1880

Compiled from Letters and Official Papers

By LADY BETTY BALFOUR. 8vo

LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.

LONDON, NEW YORK, AND BOMBAY

PERSONAL & LITERARY LETTERS OF ROBERT FIRST EARL OF LYTTON

Robert Lytton
at the age of 18

PERSONAL & LITERARY LETTERS OF ROBERT FIRST EARL OF LYTTON

EDITED BY

LADY BETTY BALFOUR

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. I

LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.
39 PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON
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1906

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PREFACE

This book, as the title shows, is a collection of Letters, and makes no pretension to be a complete biography. An account of my father's Indian Administration (the most important public work of his life), compiled from his official letters and despatches, has already been published. The letters in the present volumes are selected from the great mass of his private correspondence with the object, first, of setting forth as truthfully and vividly as possible the human personality of the writer, his thoughts, feelings, opinions, and outlook on the world; and secondly, of illustrating his poetical and literary work. Letters on public affairs have been preserved here and there; but for the most part only so far as they serve to show the writer's point of view or motives for action. During the four years of his Indian Viceroyalty the interest and overwhelming amount of his official work wholly absorbed him, and for the time literature was put aside. But, with this exception, there was no other period when he would

have regarded his public work as the most engrossing or the most serious occupation of his life. He pursued his profession from a sense of duty and as a means of livelihood, but the work which called forth his best energies, his deepest enthusiasm, and his finest intellectual capacities was, from boyhood upwards, that of poetical composition.

Any one so many-sided as my father, and in his human intercourse so generous in sympathy, so catholic in taste, must necessarily appear in widely different aspects to different persons. The very richness of the material with which I have had to deal increases the difficulty of making a selection from it that will be satisfactory to all who knew him. Some of his many friends will feel that certain sides of his nature have been inadequately brought out while other traits have received undue prominence. I have thought, however, that in taking upon myself, at my mother's request, the whole responsibility of selection and giving those letters which seemed to me most eminently characteristic, I should preserve, if not a complete, at all events a more vivid portrait of the man as he lived and moved and had his being amongst us, than if I had attempted to consult others in choosing from the material at my disposal.

I am, however, most gratefully indebted to several friends, notably to Mr. Wilfrid S. Blunt and to the Rev. D. C. Tovey, for their valuable criticisms and assistance in preparing the work for the press. My acknowledgments are also due to the proprietors and editors of the *Fortnightly* and the *Nineteenth Century* for the quotations which I have ventured to make from those reviews.

My warm thanks are due to all who have sent me the letters in their possession, and I only regret that I have not had space to insert, consistently with the scheme of the book, many more of those that I have received. There could be no greater proof of the value set upon my father's letters by those to whom they were written than the immense number of them which have been preserved. These letters flowed from his pen without effort or premeditation, and are as natural and as intimate as his talk; their form is literary and poetical only because literature and poetry were part of himself.

Throughout his life he gave himself ungrudgingly to his friends. Now that he is gone, that fraction of the wealth so lavishly poured forth which remains enshrined in the letters may, it is hoped, prove a fitting monument to his memory.

BETTY BALFOUR.

CONTENTS

Vol. I

CHAP.		PAGE
I.	BOYHOOD	1
II.	NEW YORK AND WASHINGTON	28
III.	FLORENCE	37
IV.	PARIS	64
V.	THE HAGUE	76
VI.	VIENNA	118
VII.	COPENHAGEN	148
VIII.	MARRIAGE—ATHENS	171
IX.	LISBON	182
X.	MADRID	230
XI.	VIENNA	246
XII.	ENGLAND AND PARIS	289
XIII.	LISBON	321

ILLUSTRATIONS

Vol. I

Robert Lytton at the Age of Eighteen *Frontispiece*

From a Daguerreotype.

Robert Lytton at the Age of Five *To face page* 1

From a Drawing at Knebworth by Phillips, R.A.

Miss Edith Villiers (Lady Lytton). „ „ 170

From a Painting by G. F. Watts, 1862.

ROBERT LYTTON

AT THE AGE OF FIVE

From a Drawing at Knebworth by Phillips, R.A.

PERSONAL AND LITERARY

LETTERS OF ROBERT, 1ST EARL OF LYTTON

CHAPTER I

BOYHOOD

1831–1850, AET. 1–18

A human spirit here records
The annals of its human life.
—*The Wanderer.*

ROBERT LYTTON, son of the well-known novelist, was born on November 8, 1831.

The earlier history of the family has already been told in the biography of the elder Lytton commenced by his son, and need not be repeated here. That biography, however, was never completed. The two volumes actually written and published only carry the story down to the year in which Robert Lytton was born.

His parents were at this time living in a house in Hertford Street, London. The troubles which were to lead to such disastrous results in the relations between the young couple had already begun to cloud their sky. The annoyance which Mrs. Bulwer had felt at her son's marriage against her wishes had caused her to withdraw the allowance with which she had supplemented his very small inherited income.

He was determined, however, to make good this loss by the exertions of his brain and hand. Young and unknown though he was, he contrived, despite the distractions of social and political engagements, to earn a sum of between one and two thousand a year by his pen.

The tax on his mental and physical powers was extreme. Having to supplement his novels by a multitude of anonymous contributions to periodicals on subjects of the most trivial and transient interest, he consumed hours upon hours in repulsive drudgery. If these intrusive labours were fretting from his distaste for them, his fictions were exhausting from the hold they took on his imagination. With the necessity for quick production, the pauses (far too brief) in the manual labour were filled, not by placid ruminations but by his acting over in feverish thought the dramatic situations of the coming chapter.[1]

Such a life could not but be destructive to the health and temper of a man by nature sensitive and irritable. A friend of his wife described him at this time as "like a man who has been flayed, and is sore all over." He himself has recorded that he then had for his wife "an ardent affection and an unbounded esteem." But in the crowded, fevered life he did not reap the fruits of his love. "He was nearly always either writing, or meditating in preparation for it. She had and could have but little of his society; and when they were together his nervous irritability vented itself at every unwelcome circumstance in complaints, or taunts, or fits of anger." These trials his wife at first bore with remarkable gentleness and patience, but it was for his love and companionship that she had married him, and when the conditions of his life precluded him

[1] *The Life, Letters, and Literary Remains of Edward Bulwer, Lord Lytton*, by his son, vol. ii. p. 215.

from bestowing these upon her, at all events outwardly, the occupations of motherhood and of housekeeping entirely failed to reconcile her to their loss. Her first child was a daughter, who, according to a custom more common in those days than now, had been sent out to nurse. "Her maternal instinct," writes her son, "thus thwarted in its origin, never revived. The care of children was ever afterwards distasteful to her." At the age of three, little Emily was sent away from home to an infant school. Another source of friction then arose from the fact that, although Mrs. Bulwer forgave her son and restored to him his allowance, she refused to extend her forgiveness to his wife. Mr. Bulwer's arguments against this attitude induced his mother to relent so far as to call upon her daughter-in-law. She was, however, not satisfied with her reception, and in complaining of it to her son reminded him that she "maintained" his wife. This taunt so wounded his pride that he refused any longer to accept pecuniary help from her. Nothing could kill the chivalrous and ardent affection that he had for his mother, but her harsh treatment served as an additional cause of alienation between himself and his wife. Their happiness was not yet broken, but it had received its first shocks. The birth of their second and only other child is thus recorded in the unfinished biography:—

When my father became editor of the *New Monthly Magazine*, my mother was expecting her second confinement. At the beginning of November she wrote to Mrs. Vanderstegen from Hertford Street, whither she had returned for the event, that she was ready to drown herself with vexation at the thought of it, and that she expected that the child would be appropriately born on Guy Fawkes day. The occurrence was got through, however, with less trouble than she expected. The child

—a boy—was born on November 8, and on the 28th she wrote again to her friend: "Many thanks for your kind congratulations, which I am sure you will repeat when I tell you that I was barely an hour and a half ill, notwithstanding all my croaking; and so well immediately afterwards that I could not believe I had a child till I saw it."[1]

On the day of this birth, the father writes to Benjamin Disraeli: "Mrs. Bulwer has this day 'presented me with a son,' as 'the polite' express it, so I have good reason for being brief in my communications to you."[2]

In 1835 Mr. and Mrs. Bulwer lived in a house at Acton, near Ealing. Both their children were with them; Emily was eight years old, and Robert, who then went by the name of Teddy,[3] was barely four. Forty-seven years later he revisited this temporary home of his childhood and found his recollections of it still fresh.

To Mrs. C. W. Earle. *June* 1882.

On my way back to London, I called at Berymede Priory, Acton, where my father and mother lived after their return from Italy till the date of their separation, and of which I still have very distinct recollections. I ascertained by a huge placard on the old ivy-covered wall which surrounds it that the property is now to be sold, was informed by an old woman at the lodge gate that I could not see it without an order from the grocer at Acton—went to see him and asked for one. He replied that I could not have one unless I was an intending purchaser, and although he at the same time

[1] *The Life, Letters, and Literary Remains of Edward Bulwer, Lord Lytton*, by his son, vol. ii. p. 293.

[2] Ibid., p. 324.

[3] He was christened Edward Robert.

informed me that the price of the property is £27,000 I had the audacity to say that I *was* an intending purchaser. When the old woman saw my name on the order she exclaimed, "Why, this place belonged many years ago to the great Bulwer Lytton, did you know that?" "Yes." "Any relation to him?" "His son." She eyed me shrewdly—and with an air of evident disappointment. "Ah," she said, "he was the handsomest man I ever saw—or shall see—not like you." "What! you were then in his service at the Priory when he lived here?" "No. I have been here thirty-six years—but not so long as that. The place is full of *historical* associations —and now to think it should be cut into bits—and sold —to *common* people. Oh do buy it, my lord, and keep it together for *his* sake." "But when and how did you know him?" "I saw him once—once only. Years ago, Bulwer, as we used to call him—rang at that gate—and asked to see the place. I was obliged to tell him that my orders were to admit no one. He stood under yonder tree, and stamped his foot, exclaiming, 'Good God, this place was once my own property—and now I am not allowed even to look at it!' He *did* look all round him, nodded his head—and went away without another word. I wrote a poem on it." "What! A poem? You?" "Yes, I am a poetess—when you have seen this house I will show you my poems." The house and grounds are really beautiful. And both of them quite unchanged—except that the house is now unfurnished. I remember every spot quite distinctly—and surprised the old woman by *leading her* to each corner of it before she could point it out. The terrace with the urns on it still standing. (I was whipped by my mother with nettles for 'telling a lie' when I declared that I had not broken one of them, which I had myself seen blown down by the wind.) The pond, which once seemed to me so enormous—the old elms, such elms—the kitchen-garden, where my sister and I ran races for the pears and apples my father used to give us—the nursery where I made a

shirt for the cat—the back staircase I fell down—the drawing-room, dining-room—the library, out of which it seemed as if but yesterday I had seen my father stalking in a reverie, with his long pipe, and flowing dressing-gown. Ah me, *tempi passati!*

The old woman's poem was rubbish. But how strange —was it not—this little anecdote of hers."

On the 10th of April 1836 the deed of separation between Mr. and Mrs. Bulwer on the ground of incompatibility of temper was signed, and the home at Acton was broken up.

At this point it is necessary to say a few words about Miss Greene, the chief friend and guardian of the children, to whose charge they were shortly made over, and with whom they lived till school days began. She was a lady of Irish birth, whose parents were descended from Cromwellian settlers, and were neighbours of the family of Wheeler in the county of Louth. It was in Ireland that Miss Greene first became acquainted with Rosina Wheeler as a beautiful and brilliant girl of fifteen, and when her marriage some years later with Mr. Bulwer took place, Miss Greene was one of the first friends welcomed by the young couple to their new home. She kept a diary in which she recorded with great detail the history of her connection with the Bulwer family, both during the first years of their married life and after their separation. She also minutely describes the life of the children up to the time of Emily's death at the age of twenty and the end of Robert Lytton's school days.

No member of the Lytton family can read this document without emotion and a feeling of gratitude towards the writer. Miss Greene had no blood tie with the children; they had no claim upon her, yet she gave them nothing less than her life. She made a home for them, and tended them with a

fostering affection which but for her their childhood would have lacked. Something of the puritanical simplicity of her forbears tinged her moral and religious teaching, and intellectually her outlook was narrow and restricted, but her capacity for devotion was unbounded, and never failed the otherwise homeless children. For Rosina, the children's mother, Miss Greene appears to have formed a romantic attachment the first time she ever saw her, and while often disapproving of her sayings and doings, that attachment did not waver till Rosina after her separation proved herself quite without maternal affection. Miss Greene then left her friend to become a mother to the children. Of their father, Edward Bulwer, she speaks in turn with admiration, pity, and disapproval. His kindness and affection for his children she represents as greater and far more conscientious than anything ever shown to them by their mother, but it was too fitful, interrupted by periods of reprehensible neglect, and also, in her eyes, at times eccentric and unwholesome.

Immediately after the separation, Mrs. Bulwer went to Ireland with her children and Miss Greene. They lived in a house at St. Douloughs, five miles from Dublin. The time spent there was not more than nine months, and the children could only have seen one summer at this country place, but in Robert Lytton's recollection it loomed so large that he used to speak of his time in Ireland as if it had lasted for years. He has recorded his impressions of his child life there in a letter written many years later.

To LADY SHERBORNE. *Cintra, September* 30, 1875.

I was, I believe, for some years in Ireland when I was quite a child, and have never been there since. My poor sister and I were taken there by the Dowager

shortly after her separation from my father, and I think the years we passed in Ireland were the happiest in our lives. We lived in an old farmhouse called, I remember, St. Douloughs (and pronounced St. Doolas), on the road to Dublin. It belonged to a Mrs. Shaw, the married sister or cousin of Miss Greene—a friend of the Dowager's before her marriage, but who took my father's side when they quarrelled, and to whose care we children were afterwards entrusted. Till my sister went to Germany and I to school (at eight years old), we were brought up by her (on very narrow means) in a small lodging-house at Cheltenham. Miss Greene is dead long since, and I have never been able to discover what has become of the rest of the family.[1] But I have dim, happy recollections of our life in Ireland. I remember that we could see the Wicklow mountains and "Ireland's Eye" from our nursery window. That we were sometimes taken for a picnic to a sandy bay, the name of which I forget,[2] and the sense of mystery and wonder with which I was filled by the sight of the great ships we used to see sailing by to and from unknown places. The same mysterious impression still comes over me whenever I see sailing vessels near the shore from a sandy open coast: and there is one verse of Tennyson which always brings the image of that bay with a rush before my eyes.

> "And the stately ships go on,
> To their haven under the hill;
> But O! for the touch of a vanish'd hand,
> And the sound of a voice that is still!"

I remember that there was on this strand (which we children called "The Velvet Strand") a great variety of very beautiful shells, which we used to carry away in our laps and plant about an old dark shrubbery traversed

[1] After his return from India, Robert Lytton again met and joyfully welcomed to Knebworth a niece of Miss Greene, and the companion of his childhood. See p. 10.

[2] Probably that part of the Bay of Dublin now called *The Golden Strand*.

by a little rivulet, making of them mimic sea-shores.[1] There was also among the downs and rocks a great abundance of small white pansies. I have found the same flowers on the dunes of the North Sea in Holland. I remember that my sister had a little pony, and that we used to ride it by turns; that there was a good-natured carpenter in the village who made a bow and arrows, armed with which I thought myself an Amadis of Gaul; that our great field of adventure was a solitary grass-grown old stone quarry some way from the house, intersected by broken walls full of fossils—with a ruined abbey on the ridge—and a dark sullen tarn in the hollow where peasants used to fish for horse-leeches. I remember also an old deserted house in the neighbourhood surrounded by a deep meadow in which the grass waved high above our heads and was thick with buttercups. To this house was attached an old deserted garden with large cabbage-roses drooping over the mildewed walks and round the rotting gate. The place was called Abbeville. I know not who it belonged to. It was always empty, and my impression was that nobody ever had lived or ever would live in it again, since some one had died there. Probably a child's fancy, founded on no fact. It was generally in the afternoon towards sunset that we visited that deserted house—and to this hour evening sunlight glaring on the windows of an empty house gives me a cold creeping, and seems to me the quintessential expression of melancholy. It is like the light shining on a dead man's eyes, which have no light *within* them.

I remember, too, that there was a scapegrace of the family called Bob, who was said to be a very wild fellow, a regular Irish squireen, and that he once tied the gardener (who had offended him) to the garden gate and painted the man's face pea-green. The family were

[1] Sixty years later my own children gathered shells on the same strand, unconscious of the fact that their grandfather had also played there as a child, but they too found the shells finer there than on any other sea-shore.

kind to us children, and I think the time we passed under their roof was the only period of our childhood when we got food enough to keep body and soul comfortably together. I suppose they are all dead long ago. Peace to their ashes and their souls!

In 1838 the children, with the consent of both parents and at Miss Greene's request, were wholly committed to her charge. She took them to live at Coventry, and afterwards at Cheltenham, where her own niece, a little girl then called "Bennie," shared their life. This niece is still alive, and has sent me the following recollections of that time:—

"We were all together in a lovely house, as I remember it, within a walk of Coventry. I think Emily must have been ten that summer. My association of wild roses, with her birthday, which lasts with me still as the Junes come round, dates from that time. There was a large room at the top of the house which was called 'The Children's Room,' where we used to spend hours and hours in the most untroubled enjoyment. We had hardly any toys, except plenty of little wooden bricks; but we had some books, notably one ancient, square, very thick volume of fairy tales, and our wide flowing fancies. By this time we knew *The Lady of the Lake*—a good deal of it by heart—and used to act it together, especially the opening scene of the Chase, which one would not think lent itself to representation by three little children in a nursery. But it was all very vivid to us. Robert was the king, rather inclined to overdo his part as regarded the horn-blowing, which being represented by a very fascinating and squeaky tin trumpet, he found quite irresistible. I prided myself on my life-like representation of the Stag, and dived under the table, and jumped over the chairs in a truly realistic way, and Emily appeared at the proper moment from behind a curtain, which represented a rock, at the sound

of the wonderful variations which the king performed on his horn.

"But Emily and I did a cruel thing then. We had invented a fairyland of our own, and used to say that now and then we were able to go to it and come back; and then we told wonderful stories of what we had seen and done. Our dear little playfellow believed this implicitly, and we went on from romance to romance of ever-growing wonder, until he begged to be allowed to go too. There was a dilemma. He had believed everything so far—but how to reconcile our fictions with real facts was beyond us, so we had to say that only some quite special people were allowed to go, and if any others attempted it they were caught by gruesome creatures called 'Clutches' and carried away. But I remember Teddy lying sobbing on the ground under the nursery table because we persisted in our refusal to take him to fairyland with us. I look back in my old age carefully and thoughtfully over the whole of my friendship with him, and can only remember this one jarring note in all its music, and think of this only with regret and remorse.

"It was about this time, when our nurse had greatly angered us all by some interference or prohibition, that he walked up and down the room, stamping in mock anger, and plucking at the front of his little blouse, saying in a tragical voice, 'Come up, Revenge! come up, Revenge!'[1]

[1] This effort at righteous indignation may possibly have been connected with an incident which I have heard him tell. One day hearing that "Aunt Mary" (Miss Greene) was laid up with a headache, he remembered he had heard that chicken broth was good for the complaint. Fired with devoted zeal, he concocted a fishing-rod of a stick, a piece of string, and a pellet of bread which concealed a hook. With this primitive instrument he managed to decoy a chicken from the yard into his room. Once captured, he proceeded to kill it, and has described to us the mingled courage and terror with which he pursued it round the room, and finally wrung its neck. Then with an air of triumph he took it to the kitchen and explained the purpose of his valiant deed. Needless to say his motive was completely misunderstood, and the act severely punished.

"Soon after that we had a very happy time together. My father's service kept him still in Tipperary and I was sent over to Cheltenham, where 'Aunt Mary' and my two dear companions were living at the time. We were all writing by then. Emily generally in rhyme, and I fancy with much more real imaginative power than most children of her age. Robert's efforts were ambitious. He was going to write a real epic, and the first two lines of it—perhaps the only two completed, and I believe the first he ever wrote—were, at any rate, original:—

> 'And as the mighty Earl of Thirstan rode,
> He passed the Castle of a Gode.'

Then followed a long footnote explaining that a gode was a particularly ferocious kind of evil spirit, who kept dragons about his place instead of dogs and warred upon all good knights. I am afraid that whenever a rhyme ran short a word was invented, and an explanatory footnote added, but then the poet was only seven years old.

"One day he had been out driving with Aunt Mary in a cab, or as it was called in those days a fly, and when they returned the driver demanded a *pour-boire*, in rather loud and overbearing tones. Robert immediately stepped forward saying, 'Shall I insult him for you, Aunt Mary?'

"With the clearest views of truth, we lived a thoroughly imaginative life, and used to tell each other interminable stories of our adventures in places of which we only knew the names. *The South of France* was vague and splendid, and we made it the scene of many romances of which we were ourselves hero and heroines. I use the word 'interminable' advisedly, for the stories used to go on from day to day, and lasted from year to year. We used to take characters in some play or story or poem and to live in them for indefinite periods, till we were fourteen or fifteen. I remember taking characters in *The Talisman*, in *The Lady of the Lake*, and in *Hamlet* and *The Tempest*, the latter a great favourite, and admitting our old Fairies and Clutches.

"After that we saw less of each other as the years went by. When my sister was married I was away in Spain, but I have been told of a characteristic little incident which took place at the time. Our dear old 'Aunt Bess' (an elder sister of Aunt Mary's) was ill and confined to bed, suffering from the illness of which a few weeks later she died. At her urgent request, my sister's marriage took place without the delay which her illness might have caused. The wedding, however, was a quiet one, and the guests were old and dear friends. Robert made himself charming to every one, but after the breakfast he was missing and was not to be found by the friends who went to look for him. No one could believe he had gone away without saying good-bye to his old friends . . . but where was he? He was sitting on Aunt Bess's bed, cheering and amusing the dying old woman, not only with witty anecdotes and brilliant sayings, but with such expressions of filial affection and regard as comforted and rejoiced the failing old heart that loved him truly and well."

While the children lived with Miss Greene, their father paid them a yearly visit of a week or a fortnight. These visits were to "Teddy" very much what the glimpses into the forbidden fairy-land might have been. His father was to him the greatest hero of romance, the embodiment of all that was brilliant, rich, and beautiful. His stories of the world and of his doings in it were a fascination to the boy, and stimulated his powers of imagination and admiration as nothing else could do. He looked upon his father as a being to be held in great awe, and worshipped with a distant adoration. On one memorable occasion Sir Edward brought with him to Cheltenham a young literary friend who was introduced to the children as Mr. John Forster. This time they were carried off by these two for a trip down the Wye—a never-for-

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gotten journey full of wonder and delight. Henceforth it was to Mr. Forster that the boy turned for encouragement in his youthful ambitions, sympathy in his youthful failures, and that fulness of tenderness which most men associate with the name of mother. In 1866, writing to John Forster, who was then revisiting the Wye Country, my father says:—

I wonder if the room still exists at Ross with the telescope in the bow window overlooking the Wye, where we passed that, to me, ever-memorable day and had salmon cutlets *en papillote* for dinner! And the garden, and the church, and the trees of the Man of Ross—are all as they were? I remember that the tallest foxgloves I ever saw in my life used to grow on the road from Ross, along the rocky banks of the Wye. Greet them from me if they grow there still.

In the dedication of *The Wanderer* to John Forster, the poet expressed in verse his consciousness of what he owed to this friendship.

"For all youth seeks, all manhood needs,
All youth and manhood rarely find:
A strength more strong than codes or creeds,
In lofty thoughts and lovely deeds
Reveal'd to heart and mind.

A staff to stay, a star to guide;
A spell to soothe, a power to raise;
A faith by fortune firmly tried;
A judgment resolute to preside
O'er days at strife with days.

O large in lore, in nature sound!
O man to me, of all men, dear!
All these in thine my life hath found,
And force to tread the rugged ground
Of daily toil, with cheer."

In the same poem he recalls this first trip on the Wye :—

. . . "That remember'd land

Of legend, and the summer sky,
And all the wild Welsh waterfalls,
And haunts where he,[1] and thou,[2] and I
Once wander'd with the wandering Wye,
And scaled the airy walls

Of Chepstow, from whose ancient height
We watch'd the liberal sun go down;
Then onward, thro' the gradual night,
Till, ere the moon was fully bright,
We supp'd in Monmouth town.

. . . . . .

When close upon nine years old, "Teddy" was sent to a school at Twickenham, and his sister Emily a little later to Germany. The separation of the brother and sister, who clung tenderly to each other, was a great grief. Teddy experienced at Twickenham all the horrors of the worst type of private school. He was unhappy, and fell ill. So ill at last that the schoolmaster became alarmed and took the child to his father. Miss Greene had just returned from Germany, and Sir Edward sent for her, not knowing what to do with his sick boy. Miss Greene describes him staggering into the room behind his father, as "pale and thin as a ghost." "I was delighted to get my dear boy once more," she writes, "but much alarmed when I saw him feverish and nervous, and with a violent cough which I thought must tear his lungs to pieces." He was in fact ill of inflammation of the lungs. He recovered under Miss Greene's care, and was next sent to a school at Brighton. He writes from this school to his father :—

Thank you for what you said of my poem and all your kindness about it. I do not ever think I shall like

[1] Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton. [2] John Forster.

to give up my old friend the poetry. It cheers me when ill or unhappy. I always feel inclined to give vent to my feelings in poetry when alone either in joy or sorrow. I feel so ready to devote myself to it for life, for it is almost like a companion, and I feel so certain that I should make a great poet if I ever was one at all, but I know you know best, and you can tell all those feelings which grow on us when young, and afterwards leave us. I can see too myself that there are a great many disadvantages to my ever being a writer. But I am afraid I am egotistical, so enough of myself.

While at Brighton he made the acquaintance of Mr. Horace Smith, one of the authors of the *Rejected Addresses*, and the following poem was given me by his daughter. She believed it to have been written by Robert Lytton for her sister's album when he was a boy of twelve years old.

THE MODERN WOOER

Since woman is blind,
  When her lover's before her,
Here's a peep at the mind
  Of her ardent adorer.
"I'm fickle, I own,"
  Says in thought the perfidious,
"But the fickle are known
  To be very fastidious.

"Though I want the divine,
  I will stoop to the human,
And will briefly define
  What I ask in a woman.
She must always be seen
  As I first did behold her,
She is now eighteen
  And must cease to grow older.
She must never coquet
  With young frivolous fellows.
If I flirt, she may fret,
  But must never be jealous.

She must dress to a pin,
  Have new caps in profusion,
But no bill must come in
  To destroy the illusion.

"She must nurse me when ill,
  So her health must be splendid;
Could she stoop to a pill
  All romance would be ended.
If I storm she must soothe,
  (Who can bear contradiction?)
Be as honest as truth
  And as lively as fiction.
Even then I'm inclined
  To suspect she would bore me.
But I should not much mind,
  If I let her—adore me."

E. B. L.

While his sister was abroad, Teddy's holidays were spent at school or with a tutor, but there were occasional visits to the bachelor rooms at Lincoln's Inn Fields to see his old friend Mr. Forster. These were bright spots in his life. He would arrive sometimes with scarcely enough clothing, or proper shoes to his feet. Mr. Forster would supply these deficiencies, and then take him to see Macready at the Haymarket (for he already had an enthusiasm for the stage), or to dine with Dickens, or to share the bachelor dinners in Forster's own rooms. The little schoolboy enjoyed with eager interest these first glimpses into a literary world, and for the time forgot his troubles. In later years when Mr. Forster married and the child grew into a man, these bachelor days were lovingly recalled.

To Mr. Forster. 1856.

Ah, those memories of Lincoln's Inn Fields; what boyish recollections crowd back upon me now! What pictures of old hours in those rooms! You with your

strong forehead bowed over that relentless *Examiner*[1] table, sacrificing the Bishops and saying a kind word now and then to poor Liberty dying across the world. Macready glaring at you across the witch's cauldron, and Dolly Varden[2] holding her pretty sides and laughing behind you. Henry[3] outside in conference with the printer's devil or the Member of Parliament who made the cleverest speech overnight, or perhaps the Laureate[4] himself; and I, like the Attic Bee in Horace, gathering sweet *Time* from book to book among your innumerable classic shelves. Alas, are all these days taken from us and become "portions and parcels of the dreadful past"?

Many a Christmas, otherwise dull and lonely, was made bright by John Forster's Christmas books, John Forster's dinner parties, and, best of all, John Forster's play parties.

"Through you I first heard Macready, heard Hamlet, heard Macbeth (his Macbeth, how fine it was!), and Jaques at Arden. O ducdame, ducdame, to get back into the circle and be a fool for ever."[5] These kindnesses, which were slight episodes in John Forster's life, were to the boy epoch-making, and laid the foundation of his tastes and gave a direction to his talents.

In 1845 his father sent him at the age of fourteen to Harrow, where he remained for three years. His public-school life was not marked by any school distinctions. "I was an idle boy," he says of himself. "The only prize I ever succeeded in winning at Harrow was a nonsense scholarship; and I am afraid I must confess that the only thing I ever learnt there was an extreme dislike of learning

[1] Of which Mr. Forster was editor.

[2] Picture of Dolly Varden by Frith, now in the Forster collection at Kensington. [3] Forster's servant. [4] Tennyson.

[5] To John Forster. Christmas 1855.

Amiens. What's that *ducdame?*
Jaques. 'Tis a Greek invocation to call fools into a circle.
—*As You Like It.*

anything at all."[1] He had little respect for the methods of public-school teaching prevalent in his day. The compulsory composition of Greek and Latin verse he thought a—

cruel and senseless custom. Looking back upon the system of instruction prevalent at all our great public schools when I was a boy at Harrow, I must say it has often appeared to me like a huge practical joke played off by the masters upon the boys. For what, indeed, could be more grimly facetious than to compel a helpless unhappy youth to waste some three or four precious years of his boyhood in trying to imitate the periods of Cicero, the hexameters or the alcaics of Horace, when the knowledge of the language he is working in is still so imperfect that it does not even enable him to perceive that *solis trabes* is not the Latin for "sunbeams," and that the words *commutatio condimentorum* do not mean the "alternations of the seasons." Yet I myself have seen these choice specimens of Latinity in the compositions of Harrow boys.[2]

Nevertheless he owned that he was glad to have been to a public school, not for what he learnt or for the friends he made there—

but because the unconscious social education which boys give each other has been especially valuable to me through life. My temperament is sufficiently sensitive to have given me through life much causeless suffering if it had not been early attempered and fortified more or less for general use by so large a contact with other boys. Certainly I owe to those school-days on the whole a greater facility of life, a greater sympathy with its gregarious conditions, and a greater diminishment of discomfort on coming occasionally into contact with some of the world's stone walls than I think I could

[1] To Robert Browning. Vienna, 1861.
[2] Speech delivered at Harrow dinner in India, January 26, 1878.

possibly have obtained by any other process. I got nothing but bad from private schools, and hated and hate them still with all my heart.[1]

The games of school life had no attractions for him. All out-door games and sports he hated as a boy and never learnt to like, and of in-door games the only one he genuinely enjoyed was a rubber of whist, though he never became a good player.

His failure to obtain school distinctions was a disappointment to his father. In a letter from Sir Edward to his son, written probably in 1848, there is this passage :—

> We cannot disguise from ourselves that as yet your trial at Harrow has been a complete failure so far as distinction is concerned, and the use of which such distinction would be hereafter. I don't mean but what some boys with whom you are familiar might say you were clever, but they do not make reputation; and you have not got from the masters and the whole school that distinction which would, whether in diplomacy or anything else, have procured you a brilliant opening and a rapid rise. Nor is this any wonder if you fritter away talent, time, and energy upon anything else than the studies immediately before you. I have given to you in a public school the finest opening that *real* solid ability can obtain. I have given you the advantage of an able tutor during recess. If you throw away these advantages never to be regained, believe me you will regret it all your life.

The matters on which the father considered that "talent, time, and energy" were being "frittered away," were the studies and occupations pursued out of school hours, which in reality were to the boy his chief sources of mental education and intellectual stimulus. He was an omnivorous reader of English literature, devoured also with keenest interest every

[1] Letter to Browning. 1861.

word his father published, every line which John Forster wrote, and followed intelligently all the political events of the day. Many of the poems, first published in 1855 under the title *Clytemnestra and other Poems*, were written at Harrow between the ages of fifteen and seventeen, including the classical poem of "Clytemnestra" itself, and his letters at this time reveal the interests which absorbed him far more than his classroom work.

To JOHN FORSTER. 1847.

The time here passes very slowly and heavily. You kindly ask me what we do here. Cowper exactly describes it—

> "To eat and drink and sleep—what then?
> To eat and drink and sleep again."

A quiet lazy vegetation amid the classics. All here is one great round of monotony, and the boys are as dull as the days. . . . I have just finished your De Foe and cannot tell you how much I admire it. Broad, terse, and vigorous, it reminds me forcibly of Macaulay.

Sir Edward Bulwer's novel of *The Caxtons* came out in 1849.

To JOHN FORSTER. *June* 3, 1849.

I read part of *The Caxtons* before the book was published and was charmed with it. My father, I think, escapes here very much from his own style, though I should always have known it to be his. It reminds me of *Tristram Shandy* — sometimes something in it like Fielding. . . . I have heard that Sir Robert is likely to come into power with a sweeping financial reform. Is there any truth in the report? . . ."

While he was still at Harrow his sister Emily died. Four years older than her brother, she had

been all in all to him as a child. "My morning star! twin sister of my soul!" he calls her in the epilogue of *The Wanderer*. Their parting when their school life began was probably saddest for her. Her life in Germany, away from Miss Greene and every friend or relative, proved not only lonely but cruelly injurious to her health. She returned at the age of eighteen to live with her father, but her life at Knebworth was little less lonely—by the side of the embittered, irritable, and frantically busy literary man. She nourished a youthful fancy for the brother of a German school friend till she found that fancy wholly unreturned. She then became a prey to melancholy thoughts, and while staying with her father in a London lodging contracted a virulent typhoid fever and died. The tragedy of her life was probably not understood even to her brother till years after, when the journal left by Miss Greene and other family papers revealed it to him. But her death affected him deeply. "In spite of all," he writes some months later to John Forster from Harrow, "in spite of all, my heart is ever turning to the past, and in my dreams and in my thoughts always by day and night I am with my loved, my lost sister."

Miss Greene's memoir closes with the death of Emily, and her intimate connection with the Lytton family ended here. A fitful correspondence was kept up during her lifetime between herself and Robert Lytton, but so far as I know they never met after his Harrow days. In a letter written to his old child companion "Bennie" when he was quartered at the Hague in 1857, I find the following reference to Miss Greene or "Aunt Mary":—

> Your letter was the more welcome to me that I had felt considerable anxiety at the long silence which followed my own letter to our Aunt Mary. . . . It gives me

pain to think she should be suffering habitually, as you describe her to be, without the comfort of some familiar face and presence; my profession keeps me in constant exile from England, and my present income allows me but rarely to indulge in the luxury of long journeys; but if you think she could be moved and that she would like to live under my bachelor roof abroad, and share with me if not a 'rusty couch' yet certainly 'frugal fare, my blessing and repose,' for the sake of auld lang syne she will be affectionately welcome.

In 1849 Sir Edward Bulwer took his son from Harrow and sent him to an English tutor—Dr. Perry—at Bonn. Master and pupil rapidly appreciated and grew fond of each other, and worked with mutual enthusiasm at their studies, chiefly in Greek and history. Their time together, however, in the German University town lasted less than a year. Emancipated from school restrictions, Robert Lytton made friends quickly, and was led into social engagements which soon ran away with his slender allowance. He contracted some debts of no very extensive character, but Sir Edward, himself a most careful manager of money, dreaded no doubt to see in his son any tendency to that extravagance which had been so conspicuous a characteristic with his mother, and he wrote to him with such severity that his letters weighed morbidly on the boy's mind and threw him into a nervous illness. Dr. Perry grew afraid of his responsibility as sole guardian of his pupil and obtained his father's sanction to send him back to England under medical care.

To DR. PERRY. *The Rhine*, 1850.

MY DEAREST SIR,—I cannot wait till I reach England to thank you for all your great kindness to me. All my tutors, whose care and interest I so little deserve, I look

back to with the greatest affection, but I can never think of any one of them with such tenderness and gratitude as I do of you, and ever shall. You were so far kinder to me than I had any possible right or reason to expect; and I have been so unworthy of all you have done for me. God bless you for it. I must entreat you to forgive and forget my conduct—no other person could have understood and forgiven as you have! I feel very unhappy, but try to forget myself as much as possible. The weather is very disagreeable and not enlivening, and I cannot help thinking of it as a symbol of my own feelings. I came amid these scenes in sunlight, I leave them in gloom. I was so wretched in leaving Bonn, not only at parting from you and those I liked there, but I thought I was getting on so well, in my German, in everything. Now I think that I shall not succeed in anything in the world, and would pray for what our friends call "a happy release." I could cry out with Margaret in Faust—"Mein Ruh ist hin, Mein Herz ist schwer, ich finde sie nimmer und nimmer mehr!" Was it Madame de Staël who said, "I sometimes feel the wish to die, as the wakeful feel the wish to sleep." If death were a sleep, who would not wish to die!

Sir Edward was wintering abroad, and did not see his son for some time. Robert Lytton continued his studies under the tutorship of a clergyman in Gloucestershire. He writes from there to Dr. Perry:—

I have just heard from my father. What an intense pleasure it gives me to receive a letter of kindness from *him* I cannot tell you. My position and my feelings are so strange, my heart is so full of love for him, full to overflowing, but it is darkened and choked with the most fearful and constant doubts, the most painful suspicions, the most bitter crushing feelings. These too I know can never be explained, never smoothed between

us. And oh how often do they make me wretched to heart-breaking myself, and wrongful, and unjust, and cold to him. Yet where should I garner up my heart but there! My mother is but a name and a prayer to me, and my own adored sister is in heaven. However, I am like a drowning man who catches at straws, and if this be taken from me what shall I look to? what cling to? Surely I must sink.

To DR. PERRY, *the Rectory, Wyck Ripington, Stow-in-Gloucestershire.*

MY DEAR DR. PERRY,—Your letter (just received) was most welcome, and has given me great pleasure. You ask to hear all about my present life and abode. I will just give you a sketch. Imagine a somewhat damp rurality in green England; an old church in the middle of a pretty little village; cottages; a green; trees, &c. A stone's cast from the church, picture to yourself a little Rectory in a garden—picturesque (but humid withal), "the old-accustomed haunt" of woes and the influenza. Here I am then, in a village, amid trees and ploughed fields, and surrounded by "a bold peasantry their country's pride," and so far in a state healthy, simple, and rustic. Now I come to describe the inmates of the dwelling—*hic labor hoc opus*—try and realise a young clergyman and his wife, only just married, and in a state of turtle-doveism, *she* rather pretty, quiet, civil and agreeable, neither clever nor wholly commonplace; but how can I bring *him* before you? He is very kind and gentlemanly, and *I like him* much, but he has just emerged from the schools of Oxford, and is *embodied orthodoxy*. Do you recollect the wretched man whom you exposed at Bonn to the cross-fire of all the German professors so slyly? that mild being was nothing —*could* have been nothing—to him. I wish you could hear him talk on Apostolical succession, and baptismal regeneration, and decry *German rationalism*, and French

eclecticism, and speak gravely of the Whigs, and touchingly of Pusey—and I all the while (who think even Hume narrow-minded, though he gloried in the name of sceptic, and Berkeley self-evident, and Kant profound), I all the while hush my heart and am still. *Mais que dis-je?* I don't want to be represented to my father as a heretic as well as a villain and a *vieillard* at eighteen! I do not regret this so much, however, as it teaches one to be careful and disguise one's real sentiments, which is the great secret of winning the world's esteem, I see—besides he is very kind, and in everything else I like him (as I said) very much, and he has no evangelical cant about him. But the picture doesn't end here; there is a young man from Oxford reading for orders (name Robinson), commercial parents; town, Coventry or Liverpool; domestic and paternal feud on account of too extensive obligations to tailors at Oxford have embittered his mind; his views are therefore misanthropical and independent. He is *tant soit peu* vulgar, and Mr. Deane says, coarse and republican. Add to these a mother-in-law, *injusta noverca*, residing with her daughter (the wife), and suffering from the bilious and dyspeptic effects of *India*, and the brother of the wife's, a boy, simple-minded, commonplace, hobydy-hoyish; this "young Romilly" of the Rectory, I expect, will be forced on me as a companion. You see how the *Noverca* has quartered "son and self" on the husband. You will think from this description that I take everything superficially; on the contrary, I am struggling hard to eradicate my miserable failings and that wretched vice of carelessness, and I think I perceive an improvement already; unpunctuality is an old enemy, very hard to drive off the field.

Hitherto he had signed himself Edward Bulwer Lytton, but about this time his father, finding it inconvenient that his own and his son's signature should be the same, desired that "Teddy" should

be called by his second name "Robert." "Did I tell you I am to be called Robert?" he writes to Dr. Perry, "vile name. The only people I recollect of the name of Robert are Robert Peel (traitor!), Robert Walpole (horrid old fox!), Robert the Devil (I dare say the greatest gentleman of the three).

CHAPTER II

NEW YORK AND WASHINGTON

1850–1852, AET. 18–20

> To face out childhood, and grow up to man,
> To make a noise and question all one sees.
> —*Epilogue to "The Wanderer."*

THE direction of Robert Lytton's career was decided by an offer from his uncle Sir Henry Bulwer (afterwards Lord Dalling), to join him at Washington as an unpaid *attaché*. In those days no competitive examination was required for entering the diplomatic service. Robert Lytton was eighteen and studying with a tutor as a preliminary either to going to the university or immediately entering a profession. He had no ambition for academic distinction, and no inclination for a university course. His uncle's offer appeared to him in the light of escape from school, and he was eager to accept it. His father's consent was somewhat reluctantly given, and in October 1850, before he had quite reached his nineteenth birthday, he sailed for the New World. He was destined never again to live in his own country, except for a few holiday months, until he reached the age of fifty.

Mr. Bertram Currie, who first met him in America in 1850, has recorded the impression he made at that time. "During my stay at Washington, Robert Lytton, Sir Henry's nephew, arrived as *attaché*. He was a boy of not much more than seventeen, who had just left Harrow; eccentrically dressed with abundant velvet cuffs and collars, and shiny boots; but even at that age witty and original

as he remained to the end. He always appeared to me as a most amusing and charming companion."

The uncle, with whom he was now to live in close companionship for two years, and for whom he retained a lifelong friendship, was an original and singularly interesting personality.[1] It was once said of him by a Frenchman that of all men he had "*le cœur le plus Anglais et l'esprit le plus Français.*" The affection which sprang up between uncle and nephew was a source of great happiness to both.

"No man, I think," wrote Robert Lytton after his uncle's death, "ever clothed so much talent in so much charm. He had a great heart—full to overflowing with the milk of human kindness, a refined and exquisite wit, which never wounded though it was as sharp as a needle; a wonderful sweetness and delicacy of disposition and manner which yet were never effeminate because they were accompanied by indomitable energy, pluck, and a great elevation of sentiment especially in all that concerned his country. All I have ever learnt of my profession I learnt from him, and in that profession where he certainly had no equals, though many rivals, he left no successor." [2]

[1] Before his appointment as Minister to the United States in 1849, he had been attached to the Embassies of Vienna, the Hague, Brussels, and Paris. Between the years 1830 and 1837 he was a Member of Parliament, sitting successively for Wilton, Coventry, and Marylebone as an advanced Liberal. In 1843 he had been appointed Minister at Madrid, where he remained five years, when Narvaez the Spanish Minister made him quit the country at a moment's notice on a simulated charge of complicity with the insurgent Liberals. His ministry at Washington was distinguished by his successful negotiation of the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty. In 1852 he was appointed Envoy-Extraordinary to the Grand Duke of Tuscany. Three years afterwards he took part in the arrangements for the settlement of the Danubian principalities, and in 1857 was appointed Ambassador to the Porte. In 1871 he was raised to the Peerage under the title of Lord Dalling and Bulwer, and died in 1872. His principal writings were a work on *France: Social, Literary, and Political*, one on the *Monarchy of the Middle Classes*, an unfinished *Life of Lord Palmerston*, and a volume entitled *Historical Characters*. This last is his best-known book.

[2] To Henry Loch. 1872.

In his first letter to his father after reaching Washington, Robert Lytton wrote of his uncle as certainly the most popular British Minister ever known at that post. To Forster he wrote, "My uncle has a very active and energetic temperament. He succeeds more than other men because he does more than other men; but this very activity is always leading him on the verge of complications and difficulties from which any other man with less tact, acuteness, and genius would find it difficult to extricate himself."[1]

And again, "My uncle, although in everything most kind, requires so much personal service that one's life would be more that of a *valet de chambre* than an *attaché* if one lived in the same house." That was his nephew's first impression, but experience proved him to be not only a kind but a singularly generous chief. "In his professional relations no man was ever more anxious to bring forward his subordinates, to encourage the young, or to promote the professional interests of those about him. I know of numbers of young men who have been placed in good positions and amply provided for for life, or started on a promising career by his active exertions on their behalf."[2]

While in America Robert Lytton fell in love with a girl who did not return his affection. His uncle's method of consolation was to assure him that he had known many a man regret having married his first love, but had never known one regret that he had *not* done so.

Robert Lytton wrote to his father of New York:—

A very great city! splendid houses, rather French society. I suppose it is the best thing in America. The houses are really perfect palaces, both inside and

[1] To John Forster. August 22, 1851.
[2] Ibid. Vienna, June 1872.

out; like Aladdin's castle, they rise in a night, and disappear in a morning, as great fortunes are made and lost. I saw Washington Irving here, now quite grey. I was much pleased with the little I saw of him. I was also introduced to Longfellow, whom you know, I think, and other celebrities here.[1]

At a literary dinner at New York he made his first speech, returning thanks for his father's health. The report of this speech greatly pleased Sir Edward.

To Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton. *July* 3, 1851.

My dearest Father,—I cannot tell you how touched I am by your most kind letter, or how happy it has made me. Your affection and approbation, and that of my dear uncle are my greatest pride and happiness. I trust that I may grow up to fight by your side and under your banner in every battle. What you say about the St. George's affair is so flattering I hardly know what to say. I was very lucky not to break down, but was not so frightened when I was on my legs as I think I ought to have been. Felt something like Gawain when he slew the bears in King Arthur.

Sir Edward had sent him hints on oratory, which he read with interest, and he again read Demosthenes at this time and Canning's speeches, but it was the living American orators who interested him most.

Everett,[2] Clay,[3] and Webster[4] he came to know well, and Webster in particular was very friendly and kind to him. Through them, all born in the eighteenth century, he could touch a former world and hear from two of them personal recollections of the great struggle for American independence. Late in life the reading of Professor Nichol's work on American writers and statesmen recalled memories of these days.

[1] November 1850.
[2] Then aged fifty-six.
[3] Then seventy-three.
[4] Then sixty-eight.

To Professor Nichol. *Paris*, 1888.

Webster I think on the whole the greatest speaker, or rather the greatest orator, I ever heard. His delivery was very slow and ponderous—you could almost count the seconds between each word—but it was marvellously audible and distinct without ever being loud. And the whole effect—much of it due to the particular presence of the man, an effect of sight quite as much as of hearing—impressed you with an extraordinary sense of power, and power in restraint. Bright's speaking has more of this quality than that of any other English speaker of our time. But Bright often talks rubbish, while Webster never did. And in addition to a far greater intellectual power and a far finer presence, Webster had tricks of oratory which were exceedingly effective, and must, I suspect, have been the survivals of an age of oratory new before the Flood. He had a singularly musical and mellow voice, which he managed with great art, and when he chose to put tears into it the physical effect upon his audience was unmistakable. I remember seeing, one black winter night when the weather was at its bitterest, the greater part of a huge hall full of more or less rowdy Americans convulsed with sobs while Webster was describing the landing of the Pilgrim Fathers from the *Mayflower*. He had a wonderful, an awful face, with eyes set in caverns, and one might certainly say of him what Sydney Smith[1] said of Lord Thurlow, that the Almighty never made any man as wise as he looked. Clay was to my thinking a very inferior speaker. But he had a wonderful old-world charm of manner, a quaint mixture of sweetness and dignity, ceremonial and yet simple. Everett was a bit of a prig, too much of the typical, solemn American who is oppressed by the necessity of having on all occasions to keep up his character as "a man of culture."

[1] It was Fox, not Sydney Smith.

From New York Robert Lytton accompanied his uncle on a visit to a plantation in the South. "This certainly gives the best view of American society, and much resembles our own country life. I find them all tremendous Tories in the South, and the general mind there seems what it might have been under the Georges."

To Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton. *Washington*, 1851.

I am in capital health and spirits, very busy and very happy. I work in the *Chancellerie* till about three or four o'clock, sometimes till five. Then generally have a game of bowls with my uncle, which is our only amusement in this odd place. Then dinner, and then some evening visit. I think the two most agreeable houses here are the French Minister's and the Spanish Legation. I find the business very interesting. The Legation is in a very neglected state, only one young man from the Foreign Office acting *attaché* besides myself, and if it were not for my uncle's secretary, Mr. Fenton, we should never get through the business.

Later on, when his uncle was away on leave, the work of the "young man from the Foreign Office" fell to him. "For some time I have been doing the work of paid *attaché*, and think I understand the routine of keeping the archives and register, docketing despatches, &c., quite as well as the gentleman now in receipt of a salary for doing so."[1]

For the present he himself received no official salary. His father gave him an allowance of £80 a year, which he supplemented by gifts from time to time. This was an unsatisfactory arrangement. Robert Lytton found he could not reduce his expen-

[1] To Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton. January 1852.

diture to less than £250 a year; but his father expected to see all his bills, and there are entries in his letters apologising for the purchase of more gloves or more boots than he had anticipated would be necessary.

To JOHN FORSTER. *America. Undated.*

America begins to interest me much. Here is a country in which railways are continually smashing, steamboats blowing up, banks breaking, &c., and yet the "Go-a-head" Yankeeism has half achieved in a few years a position not very inferior to that which we have been for centuries acquiring.

I will try and give you a sketch of what seems to me the system of things here. The men of the North and the men of the South divide America into two great social and political divisions—opposed to each other both in principle (on slavery) and *interest* (on free trade). In the South, where property of great value has to be cultivated by field labour under a burning sun, we see this vast slave population. In the North, where the bent of the people is less agricultural and the soil less fertile, slavery has been got rid of without any self-sacrifice. *Religion*, adapting itself as it always does to *interest*, on the one side bitterly decries the horrors of slavery, and on the other holds forth many plausible reasons for its retention in a democratic country.

Of course, the principles of the North on this subject being more in accordance with the views of the world and the tone of advancing ideas, it is probable that the South will insensibly succumb to the moral force of opinion.

Then these Southern slave-holders, having large establishments and several hundred slaves to be provided for, want goods as cheap as possible, so they are all for Free Trade. The men of the North have manufac-

tures to protect, and are all Protectionists. And if our principles go with the North, our interests go with the South.

The Whigs here, having been originally those men who were less violently for the rebellion and who afterwards were willing to invest George Washington with very great authority, and whose whole prejudices are in favour of higher classes, first encouraged commerce for the sake of forming a wealthy commercial aristocracy. The Southerners finding these men more or less opposed to them in their great interests, and seeing that in encouraging the supremacy of Federal government over *State* government they were damaging their own interests, fell into another party, to give which party strength they were forced to ally it with more popular views, and thus formed the democratic party. But being all men of property and position, their democracy is milder and less dangerous than any other democracy.

Then the Democrats of the North, being in a minority, had to coalesce with those of the South, and the Southern democracy keeps the Northern democracy in check. Just now all parties are running wild about the Fugitive Slave Bill; there was always a law that slave-owners had claim on and power to retake runaway slaves, but the different State governments had no laws by means of which this could be practically effected. . . . A Bill was passed last Session of Congress to remedy this, and empowering slave-owners or their emissaries to make sudden seizure of the fugitives. This has met with violent resistance in the North, and the Southerners are wild; and this is the pith of it all and the end of my long lecture, which you knew all before of course; but you will at least see that I have been a good boy and trying to "read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest," and improve my good fortune in living with one who knows all about it.

What a nice fellow Longfellow seems. People here talk more of his wife than they do of him. The women are the oligarchy of this country, they carry everything

their own way; the cleverest fellow is only "the husband of the *charming* Mrs. So-and-so."

In the spring of 1852 Sir Henry Bulwer was appointed to Florence, the Tuscan capital, and shortly afterwards his nephew received a summons to follow him thither.

CHAPTER III

FLORENCE

1852–1854, AET. 20–22

By woodland belt, by ocean bar,
The full south breeze our foreheads fann'd,
And under many a yellow star,
We dropp'd into the magic land.

The morning rose, and smote from far,
Her elfin harps o'er land and sea ;
And woodland belt, and ocean bar,
To one sweet note, sigh'd—"Italy."
—*The Wanderer.*

THE meeting between father and son when Robert Lytton returned from America was characterised by a new-born appreciation and pride on the one side, and a more intimate and affectionate confidence on the other.

Robert Lytton started for Italy in the autumn of 1852 and was attached to the Florence Legation till the autumn of 1854. During these years he developed from boyhood to manhood. They were years memorable for intellectual and emotional growth, years which exercised a powerful influence on his future life, and which were ever afterwards recalled half sadly and half tenderly. For Italy generally, and Florence in particular, he retained for the whole of his life a love exceeding that which he felt for any other place, a love peculiar in kind and in degree. "How I long for Italy once more—Oh, Florence, Florence!" is an exclamation which

occurs in one of his latest letters. His poetical leanings and literary sympathies received at this time a great stimulus from a friendship it was his privilege to form with the Robert Brownings, who were then living at Florence. His first volume of poems, *Clytemnestra and other Poems*, was prepared for the press during these years, and many of the poems afterwards published in *The Wanderer* were written at this time. Romeo-like he arrived at Florence sighing for Rosaline, and almost immediately met his Juliet. Barriers more impassable than the feuds of Montagus and Capulets prevented any happy issue to this new attachment, but it profoundly affected many years of his life, and coloured all his early writings. It also increased the melancholy and earnestness which characterised his youth, and made him shun more than he might otherwise have done the pleasures of society. "Every day," he writes in one letter, "I hate the world more. I never loved it. I do not hate men and women, nor any of God's creatures, but I hate the horrid evil of false things, shams and shows which they have gathered about them"; and again, "I don't like society here[1]—and go out as little as I can. It is a horrid scandalous place of which some one has said very well—

> 'Ici on ne voit dans les rues
> Que les enfants trouvés et les femmes perdues.'

In fact people here do everything with impunity except read the Bible."[2]

Robert Lytton was under twenty when he arrived at Florence. He was not tall, about 5 feet 10 inches, and his figure was slight and frail. His eyes in-

[1] *To* Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton. 1853.

[2] This because a man had lately been clapped into prison for heretical views on the subject of the Scriptures.

tensely blue, no beard then on his chin, and his hair dark and curly. In general society he was shy and silent, although then as always expansive with his friends. His habit of constant smoking was already formed, but in those days he smoked pipes and cigars as well as the cigarette, which afterwards became his only form of tobacco.

His father suspecting that he was undergoing some enervating emotional experience, strove to stimulate his ambition:—

From Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton *to* Robert Lytton. 1852.

If you keep your life straight and your heart free from wounds that don't heal, I have no fear now as to your intellectual development and ample success. You have the right stuff of mind. Full sacks stand upright of themselves, empty sacks are only kept up by the hand or the peg. You may fail in this or that. Poems may fall still-born, plays may be damned, speeches break down. I have gone through all that my own self. But you will hit the white of the butts at last—only keep your mind to itself serene and untroubled. And the moment the hour comes for the stars they will shine down upon it, be they ever so far. God bless you, my beloved son.—Your affec. E. B. L.

Such words were "spurs and wings" to the son to whom they were addressed; but he interpreted them as encouragement to his literary ambitions, whereas subsequent letters proved that it was rather in the direction of public life, political or diplomatic, that his father wished him to make his mark.

From Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton.

January 20, 1853 (?).

Courage—you have the right stuff in you. Prose—verse — or what I certainly desire more, Parliament, Action, Power. The sublime influence over nations by will rather than words—all will be at your choice if true to yourself, and you keep your health, nerves, and purpose; and don't let Italy womanise you as it is apt to do me, who beat you in one thing nevertheless—viz. the iron dogged resolve which comes from my want of the social gifts and graces which you possess much more eminently. If I have one fear for you it is that being born with fortune's spoon in your mouth, which I was not, and being so popular and good-looking, you fall at last into the literary dilettante, writing only what pleases yourself. If I did that, I should do nothing but scribble verses that no one would read.

But his son had no wish to be idle, and his literary ambitions were not of an easy, self-indulgent type. "I do not shirk work," he wrote to John Forster, "but love it: only that must be work one *can* love."

Florence was at this time still under the dominating influence of Austria, and Austrian troops had, at the request of Archduke Leopold, occupied the Tuscan capital since 1850, but the dream of a united Italy was already in the minds of Italian statesmen, and with the Florentine Liberals who had long been seeking an opportunity to shake off foreign interference in the government of their country the young poet could hardly fail to sympathise. "The Austrians are insufferable," he writes to his father.[1] "Certainly I would almost defy the most antiquated English Tory to come to Italy, especially the Roman States, and

[1] Florence, 1853.

not turn radical and conspirator." The alliance of England with France over the Crimean War was hateful to the Austrians, and their consequent bitterness towards England was at this time openly expressed.

"I have talked with all the Austrians here. . . . They all betray an irrepressible bitterness towards England, a bitterness beyond words, and which is evidently at this moment an element of the national character." Again he says: "To talk to the Austrian Government of the 'interests of humanity,' 'the repression of barbarism,' the 'duty of justice,' the common good of Europe and of 'civilised human nature,' &c., seems to me very much like applauding to the Pope the blessings of Protestantism. When has Austria shown any love of 'the cause of humanity,' or the interests of civilisation? By these words she has a sort of notion that we English mean something like 'constitutional government,' 'liberty of the press,' 'freedom of the subject,' or more damnable doctrines of democracy, all which things are an abomination to her." [1]

But it was not the politics of Italy which filled his thoughts, neither was his official work at the Florence Legation the engrossing occupation of his life. His uncle expressed a convinced belief in his capacity for eminent distinction in the profession, but commented upon his growing dislike of it, and increasing absorption in "less grave occupations." These "less grave occupations" were an enthusiastic study of literature, with an increasing consciousness of the poetic faculty within him and the need to express it. His letters reflect his tastes, the zeal of his literary apprenticeship, and the principles upon which he founded his literary creed.

[1] To John Forster. March 8, 1854.

"All Art demands much labour," he writes to a fellow-worker, "for the attainment of excellence, and so far from being the easiest, Poetry, I am convinced, is the most difficult of all arts. Calderon is quite right. You will do well to despise rules when you can rise above them. But in order to do so one must first master them. I have myself been taken to task by commonplace critics for a departure from the ordinary forms of verse, and a frequent dependence for effect upon laws of melody not commonly known or practised. But I can avouch with honesty that I never have abandoned any ordinary rule or law of art, without having first practised it with scrupulous and conscientious obedience in every possible form."

He made a special study at this time of the great writers of blank verse, Marlowe, Milton, Shakespeare, and of his own contemporary, Tennyson.

Amongst moderns, Keats had been his first love. John Forster introduced him to the writings of Tennyson and Robert Browning. Tennyson was already Poet Laureate, and had won full public recognition of his genius, but in these days John Forster was one of the very few who could understand and appreciate Browning. The elder Lytton could not read his works. *Pauline*, *Paracelsus*, *Strafford*, *Sordello*, *Pippa Passes*, *Bells and Pomegranates*, *A Blot on the Scutcheon*, *Xmas Eve and Easter Day*, and *Colombe's Birthday* had already been published. Robert Lytton had seen these works at Forster's house and had read them with enthusiasm, feeling at once for their author the almost worshipful admiration of a youthful disciple for a great master. When he arrived at Florence he presented himself at the *Casa Guidi* with an introduction from John Forster. Owing to Mrs. Browning's delicate health, the two poets lived in great retirement, only admitting intimate friends or

strangers recommended for some intellectual distinction. Robert Lytton felt it therefore a rare and highly valued privilege when he was cordially received into their select circle. Acquaintanceship rapidly deepened into friendship, and the influence of Robert Browning may be traced in much of the early work of his young admirer. Mrs. Browning wrote in a letter of this date: "We have spent two delicious evenings at villas outside the gates, one with young Lytton, Sir Edward's son, of whom I have told you, I think. I like him, we both do, from the bottom of our hearts."

To ROBERT BROWNING. *Florence, July* 26, 1853.

MY DEAR BROWNING,—I feel quite unable to thank you enough for your kind and thrice welcome letter. Any scrap from you would be prized by me, for to have a place in the mind of a great man is indeed a noble privilege. But this letter—so full of kindness—I cannot say how I am touched and gladdened by it. No criticism, no encouragement, could affect me so much as that which comes from you, for I have been for years your constant, hearty, and *reverent* admirer. How good of you to write to me at such length. Since you have been away I have parted also from a great friend of mine here, a most honest good man, and therefore hated by the Government. I begin to feel like a man who has lost all his teeth—nothing but gaps into which one lolls a listless tongue. What a simile! If Mr. Alexander Smith should ever accept your hint, and liken the new moon to a paring from his mistress' nail, I shall respectfully offer him this also. I met your old servant walking in the street the other day, with a *very red nose*, and humming to himself a moody tune; he looked a "most musical, most melancholy bird," but more melancholy than musical. I believe that half of Florence is with you at

the Bagni.[1] For myself, I have long ago crept into my shell for good. . . .

Dear little Villari came to see me yesterday. The child of a great friend of his is just dead. He had been watching for weeks by the sick-bed; his cheeks looked quite hollow with care. What a grand thing grief is! When some man comes to me wrapped up in a great sorrow, all other people suddenly dwindle into tricks and shams, as though he were the only real man in the world. I think the man who feels even greater than the man that thinks. The other night Goethe seemed to me almost a god, and when I was talking with Villari, Goethe seemed more despicable than a worm.[2] But there is a class of persons I cannot quite understand, who are always affecting a sentiment. I have heard women exclaim, "I love flowers so," and yet pluck every rose in a garden. And some people clasp their hands and say, "I adore talent," yet one feels all the while that they would be garrulous in the presence of Socrates.

Shortly after this letter was written, Robert Lytton followed the Brownings to Lucca, and was for a few days their guest. "They are most kind hosts," he wrote of this visit to his father. "It is something —the contact with superior minds—which both of them are. Sometimes a word from a person of genius is an *open sesame* to one's own hidden life. It is true that 'great men make the earth wholesome.'"

[1] Bagni di Lucca.

[2] "By the stature of this grief,
Even Shakespeare shows so small!
Plato palters with relief.
Grief is greater than them all!

"They were pedants who could speak,
Grander souls have passed unheard:
Such as found all language weak;
Choosing rather to record
Secrets before heaven: nor break
Faith with angels by a word."—
A Soul's Loss: Owen Meredith.

Browning was working at the poems which appeared in *Men and Women*, and Mrs. Browning was writing *Aurora Leigh*.

The Brownings and Robert Lytton were alike interested at this time in the subject of psychical phenomena, and together at Florence they were present at many of Mr. Home's spiritual *séances*. The elder Lytton also had a keen interest in all such matters, which were freely discussed in his correspondence with his son.

To MRS. BROWNING. *August* 4, 1853.

MY DEAR MRS. BROWNING,—Many thanks for your kind letter; and very many apologies for this so tardy reply. I am quite of your opinion as to the nature of spirits; I do not see any grounds for supposing them to be other than human. At the same time the secret of Heaven is just as closely kept as before. They—the human spirits themselves—and all that one gathers from them of the after-human state—are but pale reflections and simulacra of this bodily humanity, and tangible world—far less vivid and wholesome and thorough than anything one sees here. Of that inexpressible deliciousness which "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive," one hears nothing! It would seem that deity had outcreated itself and exhausted all its fertility here, so that all the other works of God were bad self-plagiarisms. This is very disheartening and unsatisfactory.

At the same time it is true that all stages in creation seem gradual—and after all it is possible that the after state of man, may not be so widely different from his present one, as one hopes and expects it to be. But I don't like the idea. What you say as to the inadequacy of the communications is certainly *exceedingly* striking. The

trunk-ladies, who paint with their teeth or their shoulder-blades, have left no fine works, I believe. But then one asks, "Why then so clumsy a machinery?" After all, one can assert nothing. This may only be the crude and semi-grotesque beginning, like the hieroglyphics and picture-writing, or the first splutter of a child, before he has got beyond nouns substantive. I think we must wait—which I do with great faith in the ultimate result. I am inclined, for my own part, to doubt the existence of pure absolute spirit—properly so called—at any rate below Deity. Now if spirit, as we conceive it, be no more than the subtlest and sublimest modification of matter, as refined in comparison to light, and electricity, as these are to pigment and clay, what follows? That by an accurate and universal knowledge of the laws of matter, and of its highest developments, we shall at last arrive at *spirit*. That is why I have great hope in the material activity of the age. Who can say where the railways may roll us to? As electricity was, until to a certain extent captured and tamed by science, and made to do work for man—an impalpable and useless element, a sort of mad demon, frisking in thunderstorms; so perhaps the science of spiritualism may in the end enable us to establish some satisfactory and wholesome communication with that rarest material element which we call spirit, and engage it also to great human uses, holding it in control and obedience by a knowledge of its own laws. Certainly, if there was ever a time for a new Revelation and Evangel, now is the day. It seems to me that there are all the symptoms that preceded the Christian Era, and then, as now, the world seemed used up, for who would have thought that philosophy could go beyond Socrates, or that civilisation could issue from the forests of the North? It seems to me that Mind has had plenty of fair play—but Matter not yet. Matter must be brought up to the level of spirit, as the body is to rise with the soul. *Form* has never been strong enough yet to contain and fit *idea;* the wine has burst

the bottles. That is, I think, why there have been so many churches and so few Christians. I have written to my father begging him not to desist without reaching some result. I think that a few years more will bring about wonders.

Apart from poetical composition, Robert Lytton contributed at this time a certain number of prose articles and tales to current magazines, thus adding to his slender income about £30 a quarter. His father urged upon him as good mental discipline the serious study of prose writing. His reading at this time led him to form a scheme for an historical sketch of the characters of Luther and Melancthon. This scheme was never executed, but the studies to which it led him bore fruit subsequently in some of the poems published in *Chronicles and Characters*.

To Sir Edward Bulwer. *Florence, December* 15, 1853.

My dearest Father, . . . My ambition (if it is an ambition) is not to be a poet by renown, but to develop my own mind as conscientiously as I can, and let it afterwards find its own form of expression. If I can ever satisfy myself of the result *within*, I shall be comparatively careless of the result *without*. I will tell you of a subject I have thought of for a sort of biographical essay. I don't know whether I shall ever be up to the mark of it. But I should do it with *love*, which is the great thing; and if I did it at all, I think, could do it in an original form—it is a comparative sketch of Luther and Melancthon: it seems to me to offer wonderful capabilities for picture-making, and to cover a most interesting ethical time. How one could contrast Luther—the burly, big-brained, world-shouldering, blithe-hearted, warm-living fellow, with his heart and

his head full of purpose, and strong conviction, feeling intense life no doubt when he could sing

> "Wer liebt nicht Wein, Weib, und Gesang,
> Er bleibt ein Narr sein Leben lang!"

and the other quiet-thoughted scholastic mind, and pensive life. What a picture, to paint Luther hard at work on his great translation, writing against time, writing against hell, with his great hungry intention at his heart, and the devil at his elbow, to jog him: and then, when the heavy brain was like to sap, Melancthon soothing him with his flute-playing! Then, too, what picturesque capabilities in that old city of Worms, with its dim Gothic architecture, and the pomp of dying feudalism, and the assembled ecclesiastics in superb synod, and this brawny clumsy monk, stumping up the steps, with his gown tucked under his arm, to beard them all to their faces!

Then the rise of the modern European system—the great Protestant powers of the Continent, and German free cities. One might give a picture too of the old Bishop-Princes and the Landgraves and Margraves, and that sort of thing—the growth of the idea developed after Luther, Calvinism, and all its forms, Church-of-Englandism and others—its struggles and political results, its faults and failures and shortcomings, what it has done for us, where it has failed us—the present and the future. What do you think of the notion? I fear it is too wide and great.

While Robert Lytton set himself prose exercises as a mental discipline, his mind more and more leaned towards the poetic form of composition, and the conviction grew upon him more strongly day by day that by nature he was a poet rather than anything else. In that direction he felt "that the most vital part of his mind" escaped, leaving only "second-hand energies behind to employ in other channels."

With all his admiration and reverence for his

father, he was conscious that their poetical tastes and judgments differed widely. Their literary sympathies were those of different generations.

To the elder Lytton his son's poetical opinions, though less bewildering, were scarce more comprehensible than the opinions of Clive and his friends to the immortal Colonel Newcome when he listened, saddened and amazed, to the assertions that "Byron was no great poet, though a very clever man," and that Dr. Johnson, though an admirable talker, "did not write English," while Keats and the unknown Mr. Tennyson "might take rank with the greatest poets of all." It was not, therefore, to his father but to John Forster that Robert Lytton wrote most freely both as to his literary sympathies and literary aspirations.

To JOHN FORSTER. *January* 20, 1854.

My father's theory of poetry and my own, in most respects differ widely. I can give up my theory and accept his, and it would be presumptuous in me to say that his is not the better of the two; but then it is not *mine*. . . . if I cannot write as I wish to write, silence is fitter and more soothing. To do this would be to sing from the throat, not from the heart, to be a sham rather than a truth. Hence, so long as I continue to jog along my own way, it follows that, despite the overwhelming superiority and power of his mind, his advice is rather more like to pull me off my legs, than to help me on my road."

To the Same. Florence, 1853.

I have read your review of Arnold and Fred. Tennyson and cordially concur in all you say therein. Arnold's "Empedocles" I have read not once or twice, but many times—and I think highly of it. There is great thought

in the poem, and one or two fragments of Greek scenery that are charming. I am sorry he has withdrawn it. His present theory must have been conceived and elaborated since the publication of the volume in which that poem appeared, judging by internal evidence. What Arnold wants is the sensuous element of poetry (to my thinking, at least). I believe that the poetical and metaphysical temperament, the *perceptive* and the *logical* faculty, are more closely allied than people are inclined to admit; but poetry demands something more than naked thought. I think that he is half right about the subject; at least purpose and backbone are essential; better fifty Arnolds than one Alexander Smith, and such-like compilers of commonplace books! But then, if subject be all, why choose the poetic form for its narration? why not write novels, not poems? or what becomes of lyrical poetry? and shall we have nothing but epics? Poetry is of all the arts the most sensuous in its character, and it won't do for the poets to rise wholly out of the region of the sensuous, and talk metaphysics, or tell stories in verse. Of Frederick Tennyson, I think Browning hit the mark exactly when, as I once heard him, he said of F. T.'s poems, "This is the proper stuff out of which poetry *is made;* but it is all in a state of solution, and not yet *crystallised into poetry.*" That's just what it is, I think. It wants individuality and never warms one's blood. It is nothing but Mr. Tennyson in a hayfield, Mr. Tennyson in an orchard, Mr. Tennyson admiring the harvest or listening to the lark, Mr. Tennyson thinking of the past, Mr. Tennyson taking a walk, or Mr. Tennyson sitting at home, till at last one gets quite sick of Mr. Tennyson and heartily wishes one could have the hayfield, without Mr. Tennyson in it, and listen to the lark by oneself.

After all, the intrinsic spell and magic of the poet lies somewhere beyond and above all divisions of subjectivity or objectivity; and, I think if I had to name what is the most precious and divine part of poetry, I should call it

"suggestiveness," without which all is barren and unprofitable. It is this that forms not the least enchantment of Shakespeare, and I suppose that Keats meant it when he spoke (in lines which I don't remember sufficiently to quote) of things worth more "to brood upon than the death-doom of Empires." It is this which oozes out of every line of Milton—it is as subtle as air, and one can't say what the secret lies in, but now and then, through some word, there glimpses out upon one visions and revelations of Fairyland. And the poet is a consoler and a prophet, just in proportion as he procures you such glimpses, and "Open Sesames" into those enchanted caves; in some sort he should stand sponsor for us at the great fount of nature, and our souls will be healthful and pure just as they are sprinkled with the dew of his gracious baptism; his duty is to know our noblest part and answer for us that we will live up to it. It is his benignant privilege to do for us just what is elseway done by the first dew of morning, the last light of sunset, the earliest star of evening—and when these have lost their potency, and that which responds to them within us is in danger of drying up for want of fit nourishment, then the poet must step in, and restore to them their original affluence and virtue. Take such lines as these:—

"Ere the high lawns appear'd
Under the opening eyelids of the morn."[1]

or

"——beyond the stormy Hebrides,
Where thou, perhaps, under the whelming tide,
Visit'st the bottom of the monstrous world."[2]

or such a personification as—

"While the still morn went out with sandals grey."[3]

or such a picture as the morn stepping—

"gently o'er the accustomed oak."[4]

[1] *Lycidas.* [2] Ibid. [3] Ibid. [4] *Il Penseroso.*

or the curfew—

"Over some wide-watered shore
Swinging slow with sullen roar."[1]

or of Shakespeare—

"Hot lavender,
The marigold that goes to bed with the sun
And with him rises weeping."[2]

or what magic in that song—

"Come unto these yellow sands," &c.[3]

And of a higher suggestiveness such lines as these:—

"When you dance I wish you
A wave of the sea that you might ever do
Nothing but that . . .
Each your doing,
So singular in each particular,
Crowns what you are doing in the present deed,
That all your acts are queens."[4]

or when Cleopatra calls out—

"O most false love!
Where be the sacred viols thou shouldst fill
With sorrowful water?"[5]

or Antony—in what extremity of despair—exclaiming—

"Authority melts from me!"

These lines always affect me strangely—

"Be you not troubled with the time, which drives
O'er your content these strong necessities,
But let determined things to destiny
Hold unbewailed their way."[6]

[1] *Il Penseroso.*
[2] *Winter's Tale.*
[3] *The Tempest.*
[4] *Winter's Tale.*
[5] *Antony and Cleopatra*, iii. 13, 90.
[6] Ibid., iii. 6, 85.

And what is there that touches one above the mere words in the thought of things that

> "make stale
> The glistering of this Present?" [1]

or of sleep "that knits up the ravelled sleeve of Care?" But I quote at random and indiscreetly. Chaucer excels in this: Keats has mighty flashes of it that will shine against the light of any old poet, as in that fine sonnet on Chapman's Homer, and such an image as—

> "Magic casements opening on the foam
> Of perilous seas in fairy-lands forlorn."

Of all modern poets, and as much as any ancient one, Alfred Tennyson, I think, abounds in it; he has set his mark upon many objects, and fenced in a great part of nature as his special property. As, for instance, "the wild marsh-marigold" that "burns like fire in swamps and hollows grey" is his flower and nobody else's; his brother Frederick fails altogether in doing this: he does not monopolise a single association: one is tired of hearing that "the rose is red, the violet's blue" and feels tempted to ask, "Could you find nothing else in them?" and his vague impersonifications are most wearisome. I have laid down the law so lengthily with reference to these, that I am ashamed to speak of myself, though I had much to say. But it is one thing to criticise, and another to perform.

Robert Lytton had now reached a stage when the continued suppression of his craving to express himself in poetry seemed to have become equivalent to "the suicide of" his "own identity." His first poems were committed to paper, but this was not enough for his peace of mind. Not so much for his "name's sake" as for his "nature's sake" he wished to measure himself in print. John Forster

[1] *Winter's Tale*, iv. l. 14.

encouraged this ambition. It was at last tentatively confessed to his father, who, in reply, requested to see some of the poems.

With much doubt and misgiving, Robert Lytton sent him the collection which afterwards formed the first volume of his published verse. Some of these poems had been written before he went to America, some while he was there, some in Italy. He knew them to be the genuine outcome of certain early emotions and enthusiasms, but was keenly aware of their imperfections. "Feverish efforts to right and left" he called them, and written to a great extent "in the colour of other writers."

Their reception by the parental judge proved more favourable than had been anticipated.

From Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton *to* Robert Lytton. *October* 1853.

My dearest Robert,—I have just read *Clytemnestra* with very great admiration and I own with surprise. Your improvement has been immense. I see for the first time originality. There is no mistake now that you have the *vivida vis*—that you are a real poet, and of a genus too that will be practical, and sooner or later popular.

To Edward Bulwer Lytton. *November* 1, 1853.

The best thanks I can give you back, my beloved father, for the great heartful of gladness you have given me must be the assurance of that gladness, and how it surpasses all other kinds of happiness, so that I could wish (were it not for the desire to deserve it better) that my life should stop here lest anything *less* should follow. . . . My heart seems to open under each kind word of yours, all things seem easy to do, and pain even light to

bear, as though a part of your own strength and fulness passed to me in your approval and love.

Sir Edward sent his son's poems to Blackwood for possible publication in his magazine. The publisher handed them over to his reader, who pronounced them to be evidently the work of a clever fellow, but sadly disfigured by affectations and modernisms, and very obscure. Blackwood, on the strength of this opinion, said he would consent to publish a selection—to be made by himself—but in the meantime John Forster stepped forward with the offer to see to their publication in a separate volume, correct the proofs and "do all in his power to give them a favourable breeze." This offer was the more gratefully accepted by Robert Lytton that his political views, though not necessarily expressed in public, inclined at this time to the Liberal side of English politics, and he hardly cared to have his first publication associated with so well established a Tory publisher as Blackwood.

Sir Edward's criticisms of the poems, though more sympathetic than those of Blackwood's reader, were on somewhat similar lines.

SIR EDWARD BULWER LYTTON *to* ROBERT LYTTON.
December 12, 1853.

One thing I would say in spite of all you urge about being content with a small audience and your own approval. That is not the right ambition of a poet who means to influence his age. It is not worth the sacrifice of all other thought and career for. He should aspire to reach a wide public. This is one reason why I deplore the paramount effect that poets who only please a few have on your line and manner. Praised as they are by critics, Keats and Shelley are very little read by the public, and absolutely unknown out of England. Tenny-

son is more popular, because a little more complete in his way. Now take Charles Mackay's poems. They are little praised by critics, no idols of the refining few, but they sell immensely with the multitude—it is worth studying why. I believe because, though they have not much elevation of subject, they have a simplicity of style which all understand. I don't want you to go back to old conventionalism, nor write like Goldsmith, Pope, &c., but I do want you to make a thoughtful study of all poets who are widely popular. And I think you will find that they all concur to the great laws of rhythm and harmony, and in an earnest attempt to seize the most elementary, not the most refining feelings of men. It matters little what you do in reference to these hints. You are sure to come right in your own way at last. But you may do much to change the "At last" for the "At first."

To Edward Bulwer Lytton. *Florence*, 1853.

With regard to masters—I do not deny the merits of Pope, Dryden, Byron, &c. For Byron I have a hearty admiration. But I have gone through these schools, and feel that I can never go back to them, nor do I think that any reproduction of these poets would stand or avail. I began as a child by imitating Byron. I progressed to Pope; now I have gone on. You say I have fallen foul of Tennyson, Keats, Shelley, &c. That may be very probably the case. But my notion is that it is easy to succeed in art, if we can only be quite sure that one is doing what one *likes;* one *must* follow one's sympathies. No man can say to one, "Follow this one, or that other, for he has truth." Better run knee-deep into a quagmire after a will-o'-the-wisp, if one feels the desire to do so, and finds pleasure in the doing of it. One is sure to find one's own way at last, I think, spite of the light being false or true. If now there be in my talk too much of other men's language, it is because I have a

strong sympathy with these certain men, and hail in their language the most correspondent expression I have yet found to my own thoughts and wants. Well, soon I trust I shall find expressions of my own closer and better still. In the meantime I am really myself, even in the imitation. . . . Nor do I think that, if (which God forbid) mere popularity were my object, Pope, or Dryden, or Goldsmith, or Byron could help me to it. A decided success in poetry has been made by Mr. Alexander Smith. He has rapidly gone through two editions, and I believe there is only one review hostile to him (the *Examiner*). I have just read him, and find, what do you think? the vigour of Dryden? the terse, well-jointed strong-sweetness of Pope? the learning of Gray? the simplicity of Goldsmith? Not a bit of it; the most brazen plagiarism from Tennyson, Keats, and Shelley. The most fulsome vulgarities, the most extravagant exaggeration of the "modern school," as it is called. . . . Take Moore, a popular poet enough in his day, though that be now on the wane somewhat; did ever man succeed in this grand ambition better than he? Sung by every school-girl, played to every hand-organ, the favourite author always to be found on drawing-room tables, and without whom no Boarding-house is furnished *ad unguem*. On the popularity-platform (as the Yankees say) he ought to rank higher than Milton, whom so few read, and fewer still understand. I assert for Poetry the highest possible mission second to that of the Bible. The poet professes to teach, and uplift, to be a thinker of new thoughts, a sayer of new words. He has no business to speak below his level in order to be easily understood; he is not to be disposed of by the "Can't understand a word of it" of some stupid dunderhead who can't understand a word of anything else. He must hit hard, and speak sharply, and severely, and give trouble, and set thought going. What matter if you read the page over six times in vain, if at the seventh a light, like the soul of it, flashes out which has salvation in it? I observe that shallowness

is over-valued for its clearness. People understand the brook better than the sea.

There is a kind of poetry that is like the blowing of a trumpet; that makes one double one's fists, and feel as bold as a lion: such as Scott's, which I think first-rate of that kind, but is this to be put above poetry which penetrates to the fibres of the brain, or strikes some new thought into your life which perhaps revolutionises your whole moral being? or even that poetry which creates beautiful worlds out of the dust of daily life, and makes you see more things on a leaf on the hedge-side, than you ever before saw in the whole forest? . . .

The encouragement which on the whole his poetical ambition had received from his father, and his own increasing longing to devote to it the best of his energies and the most of his time, robbed all his professional labour of zest and interest, and gave him courage tentatively to suggest to his father his abandonment of a diplomatic career and exclusive adoption of the literary life.

To Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton. *Florence,* 1854.

I certainly feel and own that I have hitherto not done justice to myself in the profession, and I see many men getting before me to the top of the ladder whom I really feel to be not more light of foot or steady of hand than myself, so that if I continue to follow the career, certainly my *amour propre* is concerned in advancement; but I feel that all those great and brilliant prizes which allure others, would, even were I to obtain them, greatly diminish rather than increase my happiness: each step forward would be a step further from my own ideal, and would have to be trodden over some relinquished dream, or some strangled instinct. . . . Even Uncle Henry, despite his many noble achievements and his costly

successes, and his great position and reputation, the praise of the public press, the confidence of ministers, the envy of all his colleagues, and the Grand Cross of the Bath, is an example that makes me shudder. I would rather, for my part, have been Burns at the Scotch alehouse, than Uncle Henry in a ship of war, going out to his post with the red ribbon on. As I once said to you when we walked along the streets of London by night, and you made me proud and happy by asking me the question, my ambition has ever been for fame rather than power. . . . I have no fear myself of becoming a mere literary dilettante; I think I have the faculty of expression by inheritance, and I feel sure that if I could increase the weight and width of my mind by three or four years' solid and useful reading, with health and tranquil thought to back it, and use out the extreme restlessness and discontent of youth (that now troubles me) by travelling, seeing new countries, and holding such communion as I might be able to with superior intellects, the right thing in me might come out at last, of itself, and have effect whether in words written or spoken, or action alone. I am sure that a man who has anything in him, has only to improve himself, conscientiously, patiently, and watchfully, and he will leave traces of his life behind him, wherever he goes, and however noiselessly he may live.

There was much in this letter to cause anxiety to the most sympathetic parent. It must always be a serious step for a young man to give up a definite profession which enforces definite work, and secures him a competence, for any form of labour the pursuit of which depends only on his individual energy and industry. Up to this time Sir Edward had had no proof that his son's literary talent was great enough to justify an exclusive cultivation of it, and he knew from his own experience the toil, and weariness, and mental and physical strain involved in a literary life

when followed as a means of livelihood. That he should therefore have discouraged his son from following in his steps at so early an age, and from leaving a profession in which he had already shown capacity and would probably obtain distinction in a line different from any followed by himself, was not only natural, but would generally be admitted to have been wise and prudent. Unfortunately his advice, which was sound, was embittered by an apparent suspicion and jealousy deeply wounding to the son who adored him, and strangely inexplicable in a father who was undoubtedly capable not only of a sincere and deep affection for his son, but also of a generous pride in his career.

From Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton *to* Robert Lytton.
June 1, 1854.

I don't think, whatever your merit, the world would allow two of the same name to have both a permanent reputation in literature. You would soon come to grudge me my life, and feel a guilty thrill every time you heard I was ill. . . . No. Stick close to your profession, take every occasion to rise in it, plenty of time is left to cultivate the mind and write verse or prose at due intervals. As to your allowance, I should never increase it till you get a step. I help the man who helps himself. What in your letters you suggest as the road to fame, is only the lazy saunter into a relaxed effeminate air of pleasure and egotism. It is the epicurean looking in his rose garden, and declaring that he is cultivating philosophy. All great natures must have some little dash of the firmer Stoic; all must do what they don't like—for every true duty is some restraint on the inclination. Were it not for that, do you think I should be toiling here? Oh no,—under the orange groves of Nice writing New King Arthurs, which none save an affectionate son would read.

From ROBERT LYTTON *to* SIR EDWARD BULWER LYTTON.
June 9, 1854.

MY DEAR FATHER,—I am deeply, earnestly, heartily grieved to have given you pain. The great frankness and confidence of your intimacy made me write to you thoughts and feelings as they rose in my own mind, and I put them more broadly and strongly than I even felt them that they might be discussed and accepted or disposed of in full.

What you have said is *quite enough.* I shall only recur in thought to those suggestions for the future with regret that they were ever made. I renounce them, I shall not recur to them myself in discussion. I am quite willing to abide in the Profession and work as well and as cheerfully as I can in it.

If you believe what I say now, and have often said, that my chief desire is, and up to this moment has been, to give you pleasure—at least, if not that, to save you pain—whatever be my future, you need be no longer uneasy, I think. . . . What you suggest I am ready to follow, to the best of whatever may be in me. I should do so more gladly if I thought that, by doing so, I received your affection unembittered by a doubt.

Thus a life devoted exclusively to literature was abandoned, though the craving for it, and the belief that in that direction he could have achieved most and been happiest, pursued him to his life's end. His father, however, had consented to the publication of his first volume of poems, and this was a solace. He was anxious to return to England to consult John Forster as to printers and publishers, and to revisit the household gods. "I long," he writes, "for the dear refreshment of green England, and to feel my feet among my native daisies again. These gorgeous skies, through all their luxury, ache sometimes upon the eye, and amidst the golden

tumult of the South the heart at times turns homesick at the thought of English violets. Yet I love Italy more and more with every hour of it that is vouchsafed me."

In the summer of 1854 he was once more in England.

To JOHN FORSTER. *July* 1854.

My father saw me about the poems yesterday. The result of a long conversation, too long to detail here, amounted to this: That on the understanding that I am to have uncontrolled action in the present publication, I agree not to write poetry for *two* years from the date of this publication. If this agreement be fairly carried out on his part, I think it not to be regretted, and I am glad that the period of time prohibited to poetry should be so clearly defined. I told him, and I think he understands, that beyond that date I could promise nothing.

Robert Lytton did not wish that his first venture should be identified with the name made famous by his father, and he decided to publish anonymously. Sir Edward suggested the *nom de plume* of "Owen Meredith," there being a family tradition that a certain Ann Meredith, who married into the Lytton family, was sister or niece to Owen Tudor. *Clytemnestra and other Poems* was finally published in 1855 by Chapman & Hall, a small volume in dark blue cloth cover.

Mr. Forster reviewed it in the *Examiner*, and on the whole it was well received by the public. It was praised by Matthew Arnold, and Leigh Hunt wrote of it to Mr. Forster as follows:—

I have read every bit of Owen Meredith's volume, and it has left me in a state of delighted admiration, particularly with the "Clytemnestra," "The Artist," "The

Soul's Loss," and "Good-night in the Porch." He is a truly musical, reflecting, impassioned, and imaginative poet, with a tendency to but one of the faults of his contemporaries, and that chiefly in his minor pieces; I mean the doing too much and the giving of too much importance and emphasis to every fancy and image that comes across him, so that his pictures lose their proper distribution of light and shade, nay, of distinction between great and small. On his greatest occasions, however, he can evidently rid himself of this fault. His "Clytemnestra" is almost entirely free from it, in spite of temptations from some of his Greek masters. Oh! what tears he made me shed at pages 65 and 66, though my eyes have been accustomed to them now for three years together. A great understanding is in "The Artist"; and all nobleness and charitableness in the two other poems which I have mentioned,—Ever dear Forster's affectionate friend, LEIGH HUNT.

Such praise from the friend of Keats, and the writer of "Rimini," was not to be despised. Owen Meredith read it with delight. "I feel laurel leaves growing in the thought of it." But before this letter was written he had accepted a fresh post.

CHAPTER IV

PARIS

1854–1856, AET. 22–24

> But I must to the palace go;
> The Ambassadors to-morrow;
> Here's little time for thought, I know,
> And little more for sorrow.—*The Wanderer.*

In August 1854 Robert Lytton was appointed, still as unpaid *attaché*, to the Embassy at Paris, under Lord Cowley, who was then Ambassador. He writes to John Forster shortly after his arrival at the new post:—

"I think I see my way towards making much out of my new appointment, but can't well judge yet. The work is not light. Chancery hours from 12 to 7 o'clock daily, and night work once a week, that is for ciphering and deciphering cipher-despatches, of which there are a great many. However, I have every wish and intention to work hard, the only way, I suspect, not to get ruined in this expensive and alluring place. Do you happen to remember some noble lines of Menander? He says—

> 'ἔργοις φιλόπονος ἴσθι μὴ λόγοις μόνον.'
> 'Love thou to labour, not in words only, but deeds.'

And then he adds with a sentiment and language one might take for Carlyle's—

> 'ἐν μυρίοισι τὰ καλὰ γίγνεται πόνοις.'
> 'Out of a thousand toils is born the beautiful.'
> 'ἐκ τοῦ φιλοπονεῖν γίγνεθ' ὧν θέλεις κρατεῖν.'
> 'To succeed compels to labour.'
> 'φιλόπονος ἴσθι, καὶ βίον κτήσῃ καλόν.'
> 'Be a lover of labour, thereby to make beautiful thy life.'

Yet, you remember, my father, himself in all things so great, esteems poetry (the flower of how many labours!) to be but the growth of idle hours, and the fierce toil and travail of the imagination is accounted by the great part of the world as dream-work. For my part, I think copying despatches is a lesser labour. . . ."[1]

To Mr. and Mrs. Browning. *Paris*, 1854.

I think the war news very sad and gloomy, and feel that I ought to be fighting at Sebastopol, where so many high-spirited young men are being shot and sabred daily, and not blotting paper to small good here in Paris. I answer myself, when this longing comes to me, with the German proverb, "Gott hat seine Pläne für Jedermann." But so little done here is worth the doing! And there is eternity in the dim, dim distance, like a star in some remote seventh magnitude; so faintly and fitfully and doubtfully does it twinkle in our vision here, that scarcely do I meet a man or woman, who seems to me to realise in that small point of light beyond the limits of life, the vast world which it really represents! This grieves me that I meet no real men or women here, and the very nature is not vital, as though it were mourning for the want of a human heart to reflect itself upon.

I sometimes go to the play, and am struck at the intellect and immorality of what I see there. Do you observe a strange characteristic of the French Drama, which is not ten years old! For a play now to succeed, needs seems to be that the heroine should be an acknowledged prostitute! and the women who would hold up their skirts from the reality, weep over the presentation! Strange! and yet is it not the moral of this beautiful, unhappy France? Her king, her nobility, her Church, her Republic, her Constitution, finally, "Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity," having all been flung into the dust-hole,

[1] Paris, August 23, 1854.

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what has she left to respect or believe in? She has prostituted herself body and soul, as it seems to me; her gaiety makes me sad, her laughter has wine in it, not health. Her finery, splendid clothing, houses and equipages, her wit, her beauty, with a touch of rouge in it, what are they all but those of a *femme entretenue?* And at the bottom of all this, still is beating and breathing strangely, the warm, weak, unsatisfied, restless human heart, desiring better things but vainly, for whence can they come? The God-spark in it not quenched, but burning feverishly, terribly, under all! Yes, the *femme entretenue* is the one genuine thing now left in France; hence its expression in her literature and drama, hence the terrible truth of that expression!

To JOHN FORSTER. *Paris*, 1854.

This Paris is beautiful, and till to-day the weather has been all gold and purple. I wander about the splendid streets of an evening (it is certainly a costly city—I dare say as fine as Pandemonium), "revolving many things," and often wondering what that poor devil Savage might have felt as he walked up and down London by night, made verses, bragged and borrowed, swilled and swaggered, and went to the Devil. I might say after him in extenuation of much ill spent and ill done—

> "No mother's care
> Shielded my infant innocence with prayer."

Here I am, twenty-two years of age, hard upon twenty-three, with nothing done, no word said, no blow struck, now over-rating, now under-rating myself and all things, now longing to fight, stripped, with wild beasts in the ring, now shabbily envying those that lounge under the portico. What is it Antipholus says? "I to the world am like a drop of water" to the ocean is it? how does

it go?[1] "Who, falling there to find his fellow forth, unseen, inquisitive, confounds himself." A life not properly poised—yet, good God! how much I exult in strength whenever I see it in others! But such thinkings, I well know, is time idly squandered. It is but a proud set-off against disappointed hours to cry, "Let Fame, which all seek after in their lives, live registered upon our brazen tombs, &c." You will have seen that at last something is going to be done at Sebastopol; all the world here seems sanguine. I hear that Prince Albert and the Duke of Newcastle are *very* sanguine. The Emperor not so; a grand hope, a great fear; seldom, I take it, did more stupendous interests hang upon an "if." God defend the right! My colleagues who were at Boulogne tell me that when Prince Albert shook hands with the Emperor, Drouyn de Lhuys[2] was so excited, that he rushed up to Lord Cowley, and wrung his hand with warmest enthusiasm, and that Lord Cowley looked shy and frightened at so much demonstrated emotion.

Sir Edward suggested to his son at this time to write a prose essay for the *Quarterly*. The idea gave an object to his reading. The essay was written but not published.

To JOHN FORSTER. 1855.

I have been writing an essay—gossiping, and not good—on the contemporary and posthumous reputation of authors as compared with each other. This has led me again over Shakespeare's plays: and the more I attempt to penetrate that most mysterious mind, the

[1] Antipholus of Syracuse, in *Comedy of Errors*, Act i. sc. 2.

> "I to the world am like a drop of water
> That in the ocean seeks another drop,
> Who, falling there to find his fellow forth,
> Unseen, inquisitive, confounds himself."

[2] French Foreign Minister at the time.

more I am inclined to think that he was an unsettled Roman Catholic. I don't think anything is to be deduced from the supposition that because his father didn't go to church he was necessarily a Roman Catholic. But one cannot but remember that Shakespeare lived in a time when the people went to hear the Protestant service read in churches in which they had been wont to hear the Mass, and that a great portion of the populace—especially that portion amongst whom the youth of Shakespeare must have been chiefly passed, and by whom his early instincts must have been in great measure formed—were Roman Catholic in all their prejudices and associations. I think that while his heart and habits were not disengaged from the popular prejudices, his intellect was too independent and speculative to find complete comfort at any church door; and whenever he puts aside the common superstitions, it is not to cling to any newer ritual, but to adventure alone upon philosophic doubts. He was at once too human and too genial in his nature to be quite independent of popular sympathies and types; too keen and imperative in his desire for truth to be led by the churchmen. His temperament is for ever at war with his intellect. As a poet he is for ever clinging to the sensuous; as a philosopher, for ever in search of the Abstract. It is clear that he had no love of Puritanism, which, I take it, must have been the genuine Protestantism of that day, and from which—if its hostility to the players of the Globe and Blackfriars was not enough to displease him with it—his own convivial and hearty nature must have shrunk aside. I wonder if he knew how great a man he was, and if he ever met any other whom he thought superior to himself. I have no patience with Spenser for only talking of him as "Sweet Willy," nor with Chettle for praising "his *honied* muse" and asking him by way of compliment to drop a "sable tear" on the hearse of Queen Elizabeth. And when Milton, coming after, talks of "Gentle Shakespeare, nature's child, *warbling* his native *wood*-notes wild," one cannot help asking if

none of these could find something greater than bucolic in the genius of the man who wrote *Macbeth*, and *Shylock*, and *Hamlet*, and *Lear*, and *Othello*.

Robert Lytton's letters at this time contain constant allusions to the dissatisfaction and painful anxiety caused by the news of the troops before Sebastopol, and of the horrible sufferings endured by the British soldiers during the prolonged siege. In February he writes to Forster of the resignation of Lord Aberdeen, after the defeat of the Government on Roebuck's motion of a vote of censure :—

Of course the pause of this great war lies like lead upon all our hearts. I hope there is promise in the late ministerial change: and assuredly health must come, one cannot but think, from the amputation of that paralytic limb, Lord Aberdeen. At the same time I am almost sorry to see so much of the old element retained,[1] while there is so much young talent in the House. I don't like hereditary Government at all. And it would have been a grand and heartening sight to see some of these old officials, supporting at once, and moderating out of office, something of the yet untried aspiration of the country.

In a previous letter to his father he refers to a conversation with M. Thiers apropos of the resignation of Lord Aberdeen. "Ah, yes," said the French statesman, "a war always uses out two or three Governments. It is like a march, one is sure to wear out one's *shoes*."

On September 8th the allied forces entered Sebastopol, and the war was practically at an end, and on the 14th of that month the Thanksgiving Service was held at Notre Dame.

1 The new Ministry—under Lord Palmerston—was, with few changes, the old one under a new name.

To John Forster. *Paris, September* 14, 1855.

Dear Forster.—Yesterday we were all popped, first into uniform, and then into a state coach, and driven to Notre Dame to officiate at the Te Deum. The spectacle was really a very imposing one, and pregnant with thoughts that made the heart beat. The whole road from the Tuileries to the doors of the cathedral—a space of nearly two miles—was lined on either side by a double file of soldiery; on the left the National Guard, and on the right the Sapeurs with their white aprons, glittering axes, and black bearskin helmets. As we drove slowly down the Rue de Rivoli, which, since I was last at Paris, has been wondrously increased in stateliness and beauty, passing by those costly and ample courts and pavements behind the Louvre, and the tower of St. Jaques, which, lately repaired, now rises clear between the open spaces like a pillar of white coral and foam, every window and balcony was hung with flags and crowded with faces, and behind the fringe of bayonets and axes on either side, you caught the heads of the vast multitude beyond, moving and murmuring like a sea, up the cross streets. But the sight of sights was at Notre Dame itself, for the morning was remarkably fine, and at various heights among the glittering masses of monumental masonry, swinging over pillar and saint, floated and fell the banners of England, and France, and Sardinia, with the crescent of the Turk and the golden bees of a new Napoleon!

At about one o'clock we could hear the guns firing outside the cathedral, and when the Emperor entered covered with stars (the Garter and the Fleece), and in full uniform, a little to my surprise, he was cheered all up the aisles, and handkerchiefs and cocked hats shook feathers and fragrance out to him. Then, when the organ and the cymbals began to sound, and the eye rested on the crimson canopies, the Roman effigies and designs, the almost barbaric splendour and sound, and the

Latin chanting, helmets below and stone saints above, made one seem to be witnessing some pageant half pagan, half Christian; King Pepin blessing St. Peter for the conquest of Astolphus and the Dominion of the West, or a French Clovis or Chilperic celebrating some forgotten slaughter! Then, when one came back to the true history of the thing, and thought of Europe waiting outside, as it were, while we were singing hymns, and muttering "What's to come next?" and that the little man in the uniform was only the other day haggling over his washing-bills in a London lodging-house, and that there was still in the air an echo from another sort of Te Deum sung not long ago in St. Petersburg,[1] that half a mile only across the town there was a man in prison waiting to have his head cut off, or his body perpetually incarcerated for shooting at Napoleon the third,[2] and that, meanwhile, certain cowardly statesmen over the Rhine were biting thumbs (having nothing wiser to do), and further off on the steppes of Asia fifteen thousand dead men were lying on their faces, praising God in their dumb way without any Te Deum at all—the effect was strange enough on the whole!

Denmark, Sweden, and Belgium were absent from this function and stayed at home with Neutrality. I wonder what the Austrian Ambassador, who was there, thought of it all.—Good-bye. Pray write to me soon. Your affec. ROBERT LYTTON.

In the autumn of this year Browning published his two volumes of *Men and Women*. Many of these poems Robert Lytton had seen in proof, or heard them read by the author himself at Florence. His letter to Browning on the subject of the publication is interesting as showing that Browning had by no means yet achieved his subsequent fame with the English public.

[1] At the funeral of the Czar Nicholas.

[2] The maniac Bellemane, the second man who had shot at Napoleon III. and who was sentenced to confinement as a criminal lunatic.

To Robert Browning. *Paris*, 1855.

I entertain the most sanguine belief that the publication of the new poems will place you *immediately* in more friendly relations than you have cared to seek, and that it must ultimately add the greatest dignity to your position among the greatest English poets. You have of course here, as elsewhere, thought fit to place about the Hesperian fruit such spiked fences and quick-set hedges that I cannot but foresee that many will go away with scratched hands, and those that enter the enchanted garden will still be a society select and revered—but the question is, how will these fare? and with these I prophesy that you have herein established the loftiest title to immortality. . . . Many, no doubt, of the so-called reading public—that is, those for whom all book-manufacturers provide—will approach such poetry as yours with a puzzled face, and doubting the author's rather than their own capacity, they will begin to think in their own hearts, "By what other names and under what other forms do I already know that which under forms so singular Browning would express to me?" The answer will be, "You know it not at all, and never will know it, and if you ever did come to know it you would know it as clearly under this form as any other!" But you in the meanwhile will be going on to other developments of yourself quite out of sight of these people. On that pilgrimage I wish you heartily God-speed; I hope I may long live to see you as Cowley says the poet should do—"like the sun travel the world unsullied, and set bright!"[1]

[1] Like the sun's laborious light,
Which still in water sets at night,
Unsullied with his journey of the day.
—*On the Death of Mr. William Hervey.*

Afterwards Robert Lytton himself wrote in *Lucile:*

O blessed are they, . . .
who, sun-like, in light
Have traversed, unsullied, the world, and set bright!"

At the beginning of the year 1856, a circular from the powers at home reached the Paris Embassy to the effect that henceforth all unpaid *attachés*, on being nominated to a paid post, should pass an examination. The examination required that the candidate should speak and write fluently and correctly in two languages, of which French must be one. If the *attaché* had been sent diplomatically to more than one country, he was to be examined in the languages of all those countries. Further, he was to report on the commercial and social conditions of all the countries in which he had resided as unpaid *attaché*, and undergo an examination in international law, and the history of it.

Although Robert Lytton had been in the Service for over six years, and others had been promoted without the examination, it was now to be made retrospective, and was to be applied to him before he could receive promotion. The system has since those days been wholly changed. The examination now takes place before the profession is entered at all, and a salary is given after two years' service as *attaché*. Robert Lytton thought the system of examinations good, but only partially so: "It is not a sure criterion of ability. It will prevent absolute ignoramuses from entering or rising in the profession; but unless it be very judiciously conducted the examinations will reject a great many thoughtful and intelligent young men, and admit a great many mere idlers, who have trifled their youth away on the Continent and have a facility for acquiring languages—a facility not necessarily accompanied by any other sort of ability."

To Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton. *Paris, March* 10, 1856.

My dearest Father,— . . . I went last night to call on Lamartine, whose acquaintance I then made for the

first time. He and his fine busts received me with great dignity and grace; there was nobody else present but Madame Lamartine, the cat, and a niece of the poet. Of the females the cat was the most attractive—a remarkably fine Angora. Lamartine himself is charming. There is great dignity and great sweetness, and no affectation in his manner. He reminded me both in appearance, and what Dickens calls deportment, of old Clay, the American statesman. I had a long conversation with him, which of course began on poetry. I said something about his dictating poetry to history, and the part he played after the fall of Louis Philippe, which seemed to please him; and we then talked about the war, and Russia, of which country he has been writing a history. I have not read it, and I presume it is not worth reading. He is very pacific in all his views and wishes. He told me that his affairs give him a great deal of occupation; that he has three estates and a stud of very fine horses in the country, but no money to keep them in Paris; and he showed me a picture of his "Château." When I went away Madame Lamartine asked me if M. Lamartine had made as great an effect upon me as I had anticipated? "It is impossible," said she, "to be in his presence for ten minutes without feeling that one is before a great man!" Madame Lamartine looks like a very indifferent *veilleuse* just going out: and I think that she certainly will go out soon. Lamartine tells me that he gets up at four o'clock in the morning, and goes to bed at ten in the evening. "Many authors," said he, "require the excitement of the day—dinner—and conversation, &c., before writing. Byron did: but I, unfortunately for myself, have so much excitement in myself, that what I require is only to calm and moderate it. Sleep is the best calmant. This is why I write in the morning." He appears to have vanity, but no affectation. He exacts homage, but receives it like a great gentleman. Madame Kalergi tells me that when she went to see him, she asked him what he thought of

a young French poet who had just been calling on him. "Il n'est pas sans talent," said Lamartine, "mais il ne sera jamais grand homme, car il n'a pas de sympathie. Imaginez-vous Madame qu'il n'a pas été troublé en me voyant!" Poor Heine is dead. That is a great light gone out. A great light once, but of late only the stink and grease of it were observable. Madame de Seebeck told me that the last time she saw him he said: "I get so bored with my own bad company, that often as I lie in torture, when my wife has gone to sleep tired out with looking after me, I think it may after all be worth while to invent *le Bon Dieu*, in order to have some one to complain to in my pains and aches"—and at the last moment, when he was dying, and the only person near him wanted to send for a priest, he cried out: "Non, non! Laissez-le. Le Bon Dieu me pardonnera—c'est son métier!" I forgive him all, but asking for a pension from Russia, which I hear he did before his death.

The Conferences go on *à grands pas*, and I think peace almost certain. God bless you, my dear father. Ever fondly and devotedly I am yours, R. B. L.

At the end of March he was sent from Paris to the Hague, still an unpaid *attaché*. His new chief was Sir Ralph Abercromby.

CHAPTER V

THE HAGUE

1856–1860, AET. 24–28

If the prospect grow dim, 'tis because it grows wide—
Every loss hath its gain—So, from sphere on to sphere,
Man mounts up the ladder of Time; so I stride
Up my twenty-fourth year!—*The Wanderer.*

To JOHN FORSTER. *The Hague, May* 11, 1856.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I know that it will give you pleasure to learn, and from myself, that I feel happier and in better health and spirits than I have been for four years. And the complete tranquillity and happiness of mind which I enjoy in the repose of this picturesque little town, sufficiently proves to me that I am a better judge of my own character than others have been—that my mind is formed rather to enjoy contemplation than an active worldly life, and whatever quality approaching to ambition I may possess, it is not of a sufficiently material and positive nature to bring me any recompense for what I suffer in that actual face-to-face combat which must be gone through to obtain what is called "worldly advantage." The only sensible advantage I have yet obtained from the two years of my life which were passed at Paris, has been the few days of repose which they have enabled me to enjoy here.

You know that I was anxious to obtain an Attachéship at Naples, and a little disappointed at my nomination to the Hague; but I am now so well pleased with my new post that I have no desire whatever to exchange it for any

other; indeed, I am a little frightened at the extent of my own satisfaction, and begin to feel, like the tyrant of Samos, the necessity of at once sacrificing something to Fortune by way of an instalment for an enjoyment which seems to be too gratuitously awarded me. There is, of course, very little official work to be done here. The change from Paris is that out of a thoroughfare into a *cul de sac*. But of whatever goes on in the Chancery I have the whole control, and this sense of responsibility, slight as it is, gives me an unwonted interest in the work. My chief, Sir Ralph Abercromby, who was Minister at Turin during all that struggle which ended at Navorna, and his wife Lady Mary—a daughter of Lord Minto's—are both charming. Nothing could be more kind, more considerate, or hospitable and friendly than they are. Both lovers of Italy, and good constitutional Liberals, we agree upon most political subjects, and that is always a source of satisfaction in dealing with a chief, or acting under his orders. The place itself is a little village (full of many interesting associations), and lies at the mouth of one of the most picturesque woods I have ever seen, a pretty, broken ground, finely wooded, and diversified by little lakes, near one of which stands the summer palace of the Queen, where I hear she is going to reside this summer. Lady Cowley gave me a letter to her, but as the King is still at the Loo, I have not yet been presented to her; meanwhile I hear her praises from everybody, even her maids of honour. In this wood we hear a band play every Sunday afternoon, and high and low, Burgomaster and bourgeois, crowd thither if the sun shines, to listen to the music. The female bourgeoisie is pretty, and the peasant women, with curious headgear and muslin capes, make the crowd a picturesque one. The weather up to last week has been dreadful—snow, rain, and east wind; but to-day and yesterday have brought the summer all at once; and I am struck by the way in which these sober, money-making, and avaricious Dutch people appear to enjoy themselves so

much better than our poor fellow-countrymen, who know how to do everything else but make themselves happy. After all, the art of happiness is like that of poetry. I don't find that civilisation improves it, and Homer was a better poet than Lord Byron, in spite of the progress of centuries.

These things were better understood, I daresay, when there were fewer theories about them. What harm Aristotle has done to poetry! This word reminds me to tell you something of my private occupations. I am fairly harnessed to a poem—a long poem in rhyme. It is a story, and has plenty of movement: an Italian story—time of the Colonnas. The scene is at Albano, and abounds in bishops, and brigands, and cardinals, and convents, balconies, and battles, love and war, &c. The poem has only been conceived since my arrival at the Hague, but has so far engrossed me that I have already nearly completed the first book—about 150 stanzas. . . . It will take at least eight or ten books to finish this poem; so that, if I continue it, as I wish to do, I shall have nearly a year's occupation before me. . . .

What do you think of the Peace? The best, I think we must grant, that under the circumstances it was possible to make; and I am not of the opinion that Italy has gained nothing. It is much that, at such a conference as that of Paris, a Sardinian plenipotentiary should appear at all—more that he should assume the advocacy of the whole Italian Cause, *de haute voix*, in presence of the great Powers of Europe, and in the face of two Austrian plenipotentiaries. Much, too, that the cause of Italian liberty should thus be rescued from the hands of the rapidly diminishing Mazzini party, while it is released from the total suppression of the arbitrary governments, who have always sought to identify it with revolution by denying the existence of a strong intellectually-gifted constitutional party in Italy. Much, very much, for Sardinia that she has identified herself with all this without diminishing, but in fact increasing, her

position as a European Power, and also much for Catholic Europe in general, and the unhappy Legations in especial, that the question of the secularisation of the Roman States should have been gravely considered, and personally advocated, in public conference by France and England, and this in the most solemn manner, as a thing not only advisable, but immediately practicable, and absolutely necessary.

But what shall be said of the great Walewski[1] on the Liberty of the Press? "Marry come up! an' if these be all your manners!"—Good-bye,; write when you have time, and believe me always, most fondly yours,

R. B. L.

The sacrifice to Fortune for this brief period of happiness was soon paid. During the autumn of this year he fell from his horse and broke his arm; this was followed by an attack of acute rheumatism, which kept him to his bed for some weeks. His literary schemes were, therefore, interrupted, and the long poem of which he speaks was abandoned, and never resumed. Not, however, before several books had been written, and a specimen sent to the Brownings. It was called *The Abbess*, and the subject was suggested by one of "Stendhal's" (Henri Beyle's) Italian tales, and appealed to him from its picturesqueness, and because it seemed to him to illustrate effectively a period of religious apathy, and moral scepticism.

Browning wrote of the specimens he saw: "They abound in beautiful things—decisive things in any question of the writer's genius. I doubt, however, whether you will produce quite the work I want from you—I who do *not* want *now* mere proofs of your being a poet, but the fruit of having

[1] Natural son of Napoleon I., who was then French Minister for Foreign Affairs, and presided at the Conference of Paris, 1856.

long been a poet: or rather, I want it now, and too soon perhaps, instead of waiting patiently."

Mrs. Browning wrote of the same subject with clearer emphasis: "What we want in you is a more absorbing life of your own, my dear friend, more individuality, so that you should not remind us of this poet and that poet, when you are so certainly and thoroughly a poet yourself. You don't imitate, then why should you not be original? But you *sympathise* too much. It's your own wine, but you use your neighbour's glass to drink it out of—from some cause or other—too much love perhaps—or unconscious indolence. . . . Dear Mr. Lytton, let us remember that Art requires the whole man, austerely and unreservedly given, and that great things must be done greatly, with a great purpose, a great heart, a great courage, a great energy, and a great persistent patience. So, to you, who know this as well as I do, I say just, 'Patience, courage, the victory is sure,' because it is pleasant to hear one's thought echoed by the voice of a friend, and I am yours indeed."

Every word of this letter, so characteristic of the earnest writer of it, appealed to the friend to whom it was addressed, but while Mrs. Browning urged Robert Lytton to live for his poetry, his father condemned such an ambition as wholly frivolous, and implored him only to consider it his pastime.

To Mrs. Browning. *The Hague,* 1856.

"Art requires the whole man." Ah, how well I know that! how bitterly I feel it. But why do you say it to me, who am doomed to be a Dilettante for life? If there is a word of truth in what we are always saying, and admitting when said, about the dignity of poetry as an art, its high tax on the faculties

of the poet, and its sublime benefits to mankind, why in Heaven's name should we say that the devotion of the poet to his art, seriously, earnestly, exclusively, . . . as a profession and a most honourable one, is a waste of time, . . . a sleep in a garden of roses? Why should he not follow his calling as exclusively as the lawyers the law, or a statesman politics? But it is just with poetry as with religion, . . . we say one thing and straightway do another—the endless humbug of the "*video meliora proboque, deteriora sequor.*" Religion tells us that the world is wicked and worthless, that one must come out of it at any risk and any price, leave it to the devil to whom it belongs, have no dealings with it—no shame in poverty—no subserviency to wealth, and yet good people say "Amen" to this every week in church, and perhaps every day at home, and yet go buy forthwith in the dear market to sell in the cheap, and wear out their shoes, and their souls too, in running after the world's chariot-wheels in the dust till they drop! *Vanitas vanitatum!* I am sick of the inconsistency of my own life; I am sick at heart and angry. Oh, if—if—but no matter—I keep that word "if" for my epitaph, and will not abuse it now.

There was, however, an internal, as well as an external reason for this life's inconsistency. The "sympathy" which, as Mrs. Browning rightly felt, interfered with his complete originality as poet, interfered also with his making poetry the one object of his life; for while it made him ready to exaggerate the genius of others, of Browning himself for instance, or of his father, in his enthusiastic appreciation of their gifts, it made him underrate his own faculties, and doubt his powers. He lacked one thing which prevented the sacrifice of all things else, the self-confidence namely which should accompany genius. In the biography of his father, he himself refers to a description by Lord Beaconsfield of the blighting

effects attendant on the doubt of possessing the mental power to accomplish the achievements which have become the dream of a life. Such doubts never tormented the elder Lytton, but were ever haunting the mind of his son.

He writes a few years later :—

To his Father. Vienna, 1860.

There can be no doubt about real genius. It is sure of the world, and the world is sure of it. And this is what dismays me on my own account. I am too clever, at least have too great a sympathy with intellect to be quite content to eat the fruit of the earth as an ordinary young man, and yet not clever enough to be ever a great man, so that I remain like Mahomet's coffin suspended between heaven and earth, missing the happiness of both, and neither trust nor am satisfied with myself. A little more or a little less of whatever ability I inherit from you would have made me a complete and more cheerful man. Perhaps, however, I shall take a great stride and hit the stars in some future world. I suppose that after thirty one may learn more, but one does not grow more in this world. All great men have proved themselves great before passing that age.

At one time he felt convinced that at any rate the best in him went to his poetry, and then again that best seemed unworthy of a life's devotion, and his courage failed him to go against his father's wishes and give up his profession. Later on the power of choice was taken from him. Such considerations as the maintenance of his wife and children established a necessity to adhere to the profession which ensured him a regular income.

Hence an inherent conflict in his life, which proved a source of suffering and discontent, but

also of his chief happiness. For, though he never gave up his professional and public life for that of the purely literary man, poetry remained for him a land of refuge; an ideal world of consolation, where the "Inevitable No" of destiny was avoided, and he could frame things anew, not as they were, but as they might have been. I think myself that the fanciful element, which became a more and more marked feature in his writings as he advanced in years, was in large part due to the need he felt, owing to this double life, of escaping from an uncongenial world of fact where his faculties were cramped by official convention and his character but partially understood, into a fable land of his own creation.

"Oh for the wings of a dove, to flee away and be at rest!" he writes to Browning at this time. "When I have sufficiently convinced my friends of my extreme incompetence in this precious profession of twaddle, and live, with a tortoise, and some old Italian thief, as grey as a badger, in a little villa somewhere near the Apennines where now and then you'll come and see me, I shall then be the most constant and garrulous of correspondents. Wait and see!"

In the autumn of this year, Mrs. Browning published *Aurora Leigh*. Robert Lytton's appreciation of it was at that time unsurpassed by any admirer of the poem, and he writes to Mrs. Browning under the fresh enthusiasm of a first impression.

To MRS. BROWNING. *The Hague, December* 26, 1856.

. . . Not the least thing which astonished me in *Aurora Leigh* was the great knowledge of life, and the deep insight into the very heart of the Age, which you from your little fireside sofa have so silently ac-

quired, . . . and therein so eloquently developed, The history of Marian Erle is a sublime episode . . . . I feel at every page, as I read your book, the deep truth of that assertion of Strabo's—

"οὐχ οἷόν τε ἀγαθὸν γενέσθαι ποιητὴν μὴ πρότερον γενηθέντα ἄνδρα ἀγαθόν." [1]

"To be a good poet one must be first a good man."

How often in reading *Aurora* did I recall the many times when I found you, on that same little sofa, book in hand, and you let me (so quietly and kindly) interrupt you (perhaps in the break of a sixteen-line cadence!) and put away the book to talk to me instead of sending me away, as, had you been less great an artist, you would have done . . . Do you know I have been putting your blank verse to a severe test . . . I have been translating large portions of it into French *prose* for a friend who can't read English, and who, despite my bad translation, is enchanted with it. So you see, Sibyl as you are, that you are perfectly "intelligible" . . . in the teeth of all the Aytouns in the world's Dunciad! You may almost guess from these scraps of Attic, that come across my mind in writing to you now, that I have been looking again at my Greek—though, alas, only in a dilettante sort of way, as with all I do! But I think Greek a wholesome medicine for a "mind diseased" . . . and more so when the patient "ministers to himself." Greek is the only knowledge which I do not regret the time I spent in acquiring; I never return to its pure cool fountains without feeling the better for it. I much wish that I had time to look at many authors of which I am still quite ignorant . . . Perhaps they will keep for my old age . . . when it comes. I have had no heart to look again at the dear Tragedians—and when I opened the Æschylus I first read at Bonn, with all my old notes in it, I felt utterly heartbroken. But I have been reading—(for the second time with my eyes, but the first time with

[1] Strabo, i. 2, 5.

my heart and understanding)—the *Phædrus*, and some other of the Dialogues. Ah, what a noble monument of man's intellect! Could any soul but an immortal one have written that? And what a pity that so perfect and costly a chain of argument should all hang by a mere postulate of Plato's—the pre-existence of the soul, which those who deny the soul's existence *here*, must necessarily deny by implication!

His time at the Hague was chiefly spent in preparing for the diplomatic examination which was hanging over him. In the spring he obtained leave to go to England, and there heard from the Foreign Office that, besides a report on the condition of France, which he had written, he would be required to write one also upon Italy. For this purpose he was allowed six months' leave for preparation, and towards the end of May he was once more at Florence. He had no sooner arrived there, however, than he fell ill, of his old throat trouble, and was unable to work. He moved to the baths of Lucca, where he was nursed by the Brownings and their friend Miss Blagden. This illness ended in a dangerous attack of gastric fever, and his life for some time hung in the balance. He recovered slowly, and I have heard him recall his sensations when he first awoke to the realisation that life was to begin afresh; when the suffering of fever had passed, and he lay too weak to feel the toil of life, looking out on to the glorious Italian hills. Life had halted, and he hardly knew if it was to go on, or cease altogether, but felt for the time at peace with all things.

Not till January (1858) was he able to return to Florence, and begin his studies in Italian, still in bad health, and constantly suffering from sore throat, and depressed spirits. His leave naturally expired this month, but he obtained an extension of two

months, on account of the time which had inevitably been wasted during his illness.

To JOHN FORSTER. *Florence, March* 1858.

I have found rooms in the house of an Italian family (Jews—a father, two sons, and a daughter whom I have not yet seen), in whose occasional society I hope to have more practice in the language. My apartment is pretty, and while I write now I am overlooked by two Correggios and a picture of Giuliano Paggi, who brandishes at me the knife that was to have slain Lorenzo. I forgot to tell you a story illustrative of Tuscan officials. On moving from the villa to town I sent my servant forward with two boxes, the one containing clothes, the other private letters, books, and a little portrait of Dante. Dante of course, being in the costume of the Cinque Cento, appears in the picture with a red cap on his head. Will you believe that the *employés* at the gate on opening the box took the picture of Dante for the portrait of a revolutionary chief (in consequence of the red cap) and arrested the books and papers as seditious! I had to reclaim the intervention of Normanby,[1] and I believe the *employés* are to be reprimanded. So you see Dante is still in exile here!"

At the end of March he returned to England, passed his examination, and was then entitled to his first official salary, namely £250 a year.

The two years during which he had promised his father to publish nothing had now elapsed. Many poetical and prose projects had been half begun and then put aside, but he now had a series of lyrics arranged in a consecutive form which he was again anxious to publish in order to get them off his mind and start afresh.

[1] Lord Normanby, British Minister at Florence.

In submitting the volume to John Forster he wrote:—

To JOHN FORSTER. *April* 3, 1858.

Here, my dearest Forster, is a portion of the new poems carefully revised, corrected, and *curtailed* by myself. My father seems to think that they indicate a decided improvement in character and originality, and I shall feel exceedingly glad if they strike you in the same way. In my own opinion their superiority over the first poems consists in their representing a stronger individuality of life and experience. I think that one gets more at a *man* and a *mind* through the present volume. The first portion of this book is confined generally to the dreamland of youthful desire, seeking to realise itself more or less in emotional and sensuous expressions, and meeting with the inevitable disappointment, occasioned by the discrepancy between the conceivable and the practical. The second portion, commencing with "France" and continuing through "England," forming the second and third books, represents rather the results of experience and observation—apart from positive action—and I have wished to give to it, throughout, that somewhat *playful* character which belongs, I think, to a state of mind in which—ardour being abated and observation quickened—a man is disposed to view life more or less through a humorous medium. The third portion of the book, contained in the divisions devoted to "Switzerland and Holland," deals chiefly with memory and reflection, and grows more serious toward the close, where the book becomes entirely metaphysical and—if I may say so—religious: at that point where the mind, having experienced failure within and imperfection without, is brought to reconsider its own relation with the world, put itself more soberly in unison with life as it is, and establish for itself a moral code for practical use in future action. At this point the book closes, and the imaginary

individual may be supposed to recommence life, fortified by the experience of good and evil, and humbly minded to deal manfully with both. I should wish the book to be regarded less as a collection of detached lyrics than as a single and prolonged love-poem, varied only in form and treatment by the varieties of experience and emotion. And I am particularly anxious that—with these indications—you would do me the favour to read and judge of it as a whole.

Forster judged favourably of the MS., and it was published in the autumn of 1858. *The Wanderer* was a title appropriate to the scheme of the book. It speedily won for itself a public, and has remained perhaps in this country the best known and most popular of Robert Lytton's works. When the state of mind which had inspired the poems had passed away, the popularity of this early work irritated and annoyed him. Being out of sympathy with his own old self, he condemned and would have denied the poems which portrayed that self.

His first volume, *Clytemnestra and other Poems*, was the outcome of precocious boyhood. Some of the poems contained in it were sad, but were not unhealthy. The melancholy induced by the death of his sister and the circumstances of his youth colours the tone of them, but he himself in later life recognised in them "the health and calm of a youth still pure and studious." *The Wanderer*, on the other hand, was written under the influence of the first great passion of his manhood, to which reference has already been made. His nature was in all its relations a fervently loving one. As a son, as a friend, and later on as a father, his affections were not only ardently felt, but expressed with a glowing generosity rare indeed in an Englishman. He could not love by halves. Bacon has said that a man with no friend to open himself unto is a cannibal of his

own heart. In the same way when all legitimate external expression of a great passion is denied, the self-suppression entailed by the concealment of it, though in the beginning it may ennoble a character through the pain of self-sacrifice, will usually end in poisoning it. A morbid misery succeeds to a noble suffering, or the heart is hardened and embittered. Robert Lytton was not hardened, but the feeling which found its sole outlet in the lyrics of *The Wanderer*, and gave to them an intensity and genuineness which probably constitute their greatest merit, made his life during these years to a great extent a restless and unhappy one. "God knows," he writes of them to Robert Browning, "they ought to be original, for they seemed torn out of one's very entrails." But though "original" in feeling many of the poems were unconsciously imitative in form. Years after their first publication he himself wrote of them and of the passion which inspired them with almost fierce severity to a friend :—

To Comte de Gobineau. *June* 8, 1866.

Je suis très honteux que quelqu'un m'aura joué le mauvais tour de vous donner *The Wanderer*—produit indigeste d'une jeunesse maladive et gaspillée. Vous avez grandement raison en qualifiant *The Portrait* de *malsain :* mais il m'a fait un extrême plaisir de voir que vous ne doutiez pas que je serais aujourd'hui de votre opinion : car cela me prouve que vous me connaissez bien. Certes ce petit poème est malsain—mais tout est malsain dans ce volume. Tout ce qui se trouve dans le volume intitulé *The Wanderer* est le produit d'une période d'extrême souffrance physique et morale. Tout cela a été écrit a l'état de fièvre. Depuis mon enfance j'avais la manie de chercher dans les vers une expression quelconque de tout ce que je sentais et de tout ce que je

savais. Avant l'âge de vingt ans j'avais écrit un petit volume de poésie qui avait la fraîcheur de l'aspiration et toute la santé et le calme d'une jeunesse encore pure et studieuse. Bientôt après les mechants esprits m'ont jeté dans l'enfer d'une passion funeste, déchirante, presqu'insupportable—un amour profondément senti, et profondément mal placé, qui s'est emparé de tout ce qui était en moi pour l'abimer dans une angoisse dévorante sans être ni grande, ni noble, contre laquelle j'ai lutté, toujours meurtri, et toujours vaincu, pendant des années d'une existence déroutée et errante dans le délire de la maladie. Mon physique en a souffert le coup pour réagir encore sur mon moral. Je souffrais d'un tic nerveux dont les douleurs journalières étaient excessives. Pendant ce temps j'écrivais sans but et sans bonheur tout ce chaos de vilaines choses qui se trouve dans *The Wanderer*. En l'écrivant selon le besoin de chaque moment de malaise, j'y ai exprimé souvent avec sincérité de forme les douleurs qui me poussaient à crier. Mais souvent, et plus souvent peut-être, ayant le cœur plein mais la tête vide, vivant dans le sentiment—un sentiment maladif sans la pensée et sans l'instruction, je ne faisais, sans m'en rendre conscience, que rendre l'écho des cris poussés par les autres. Comme cela ce volume à côté de quelques morceaux qui n'ont de mérite que celui d'une réalité hideuse, se trouve rempli d'échos bien faibles, et d'imitations bien pauvres—d'un tas d'autres poètes, tel que Heine, de Musset, et leurs semblables.

As a result of this revulsion of feeling against the poems, when he prepared a new edition of them in 1866 he cut out a good half of the material in the original *Wanderer*, and considerably altered nearly all the poems that remained, an act which those who loved the original edition have found it hard to forgive him. If it is true that we "rise on stepping-stones of our dead selves to higher things," it is also true that the harshest and least merciful

critic of that dead young self is the new old self trampling upon it, and from the hands of such condemnation all early work should be rescued by those who still feel in it the passionate inspiration which makes all faults pardonable, and without which the most faultless verse-writing would not be poetry.

In the year 1858, professional and literary work were interrupted by a series of painful family events to which I shall make but the briefest possible allusion, since they only concern the private life of his unhappy parents.

Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton was this year appointed Secretary for the Colonies in the Government of Lord Derby. Lady Lytton took this occasion to attack him with unusual violence and publicity. Under the influence of the misery which this caused him, he listened to the very unfortunate advice of his friend John Forster, who was then Secretary of the Lunacy Commission, of which Lord Shaftesbury was the chairman, and took steps to have his wife declared a lunatic. The physicians called in gave the necessary certificates, but Lady Lytton retaliated by demanding that the case should be openly tried by a judge and jury. To save his father from the shame and scandal of this open trial, Robert Lytton came forward and proposed that he should persuade Lady Lytton to go abroad quietly with him. His father eagerly accepted the proposal, which indeed saved him from the publicity of a scandal which he, Sir Edward, might have felt to be incompatible with his retention of office. Lady Lytton on her part also consented to the plan, in the hope apparently of winning over her son to her side and alienating him from Sir Edward. What was, however, wholly to the advantage of both parents proved an ordeal to their son of no small magnitude. He soon began to realise that any attempt on his part to plead for one parent to the

other only had for a result to bring down upon his own head their common hostility. He had neither the power nor the will to constitute himself judge of circumstances in the past, of which he had little knowledge and that little wholly derived from one side, but all the tenderness of his nature shrank from judging unheard one who, though she had given him no cause for affection, was still his mother. She appeared at first docile, and even affectionate towards him. Her great unhappiness appealed to him. She told her story plausibly, and in a manner calculated to rouse his sympathy. This became apparent in his letters to his father. Sir Edward, smarting under Lady Lytton's recent conduct towards him, and indignant at the falsehoods she had publicly uttered not only against himself but also against the mother whose name was sacred to him, was deeply wounded at what he took to be disloyalty and a betrayal of trust on the part of his son, who should, he considered, have resented those wrongs more even than he resented them himself. His suspicious sensitiveness caused his son the keenest suffering. He seemed for the time to have lost the affection of his father, and to have failed to gain that of his mother. When Lady Lytton discovered that she could not poison his mind against Sir Edward, and that he refused to espouse her cause publicly, the lull in her hostility was followed by storms more violent than before. After five months of intolerable strain and unhappiness, Robert Lytton was forced to the conclusion that no further good could be gained by remaining any longer in the company of a mother with whom he could establish no link of sympathy or understanding. He left her at Luchon, and being at the time almost devoid of cash he worked his way as a travelling artist in company with another painter. His mother followed him to

Paris, and they met once more, but the interview was productive of no softer feeling on her side, and they parted never to meet again. Robert Lytton revisited Luchon a year before his death in 1891, and recalled this painful period of his youth in a letter to an intimate friend. "Luchon is a wonderfully pretty little place nestled in a fold of the Pyrenees, and it is full of strange ghostly reminiscences for me. I was here about thirty years ago, in horrible circumstances, with my mother. . . . We met once again in Paris—a very painful meeting, in the presence of others, and I never saw her again. While I was there I passed as much of my time as I could in the mountains on horseback with a guide whose glories I have sung in a trashy poem (*Lucile*) that seems to have become very popular in America."[1]

[1] *To* Comte de Gobineau. *June* 8, 1866.

Je l'ai écrit presqu'à trait de plume, dans les Pyrénées, loin de livres, loin d'amis, et sous des circonstances très pénibles. J'étais là—très malade, et brisé de fatigues. Seul avec ma mère que j'avais difficilement réussi à éloigner d'Angleterre, en me rendant responsable pour sa conduite, pour empêcher une terrible esclandre au moment où mon père venait de prendre le portefeuille des Colonies. Elle qui sortait d'une maison privée de santé, me faisait dans ses accès de folie une existence diabolique ; en attendant, mon père, qui se trompait sur mes sentiments, prenant à tort quelques démarches que j'avais prises, pour répondre à la responsabilité que je venais d'entreprendre vis à vis de ma mère, s'est complètement brouillé avec moi. L'argent aussi me manquait, et pour payer les dépenses de ce voyage pénible il ne me restait autre moyen que d'écrire quelque chose. Je n'avais point de livres, et je ne savais que faire. Alors en me cherchant un sujet qui n'exigeait aucune étude, et dont pourtant la nature serait trop éloignée de mes expériences actuelles pour y laisser glisser la moindre indication, l'idée s'est présenté à moi de prendre le Roman Français comme type de certaines aspects de la littérature et la vie sociale d'aujourd'hui, et d'essayer de le poëtiser, tant que je pourrais, comme les poëtes anglais du temps d'Élizabeth le faisaient avec le Roman Italien de leur jours. Pour cela, de faire en vers le portrait de ce genre d'existence, de caractère, et de sentiments, qui servent d'étoffe au roman Français, tout en y mettant une portée et un sens moral plus sérieux, et pour ainsi dire plus anglaises. On entends beaucoup parler aujourd'hui du *droit du travail*. Et les publicistes en poussent des cris en faveur des classes ouvrières. Mon idée en se developpant, était de faire en vers une sorte de

This poem, which in later life he characterised as "trashy," was at this time his chief comfort and distraction.

From Paris, where he parted with his mother, Robert Lytton returned to the Hague.

For some time past he had been deliberately contemplating the step of marriage, as the only way of procuring the settled happiness of home life for which he craved and which he had never yet known. When first at the Hague, he made the acquaintance of a young lady, daughter of Dutch parents, in whose nature he thought he recognised those qualities which he required in a wife. Before going back to Italy he proposed for her hand, and was then refused. He writes on the subject to Mr. Forster:—

I do not think I *really* loved C——, though I shall ever feel a peculiar interest in her life and whatever may add to its happiness; but it was the love of the *head*, not of the heart, which I have been feeling for her. My life had long been desultory and unhappy. . . . An intense disgust and weariness at the objectless life I had been leading for some years made me fervently anxious to change it completely. I believed that by an effort of the head I could control that portion of my character which can only receive its influences from the heart, and on meeting a very charming girl, whose

plaidoyer en faveur du droit de travail pour les classes aisées et paresseuses, de montrer en mouvement tous les maux psychologiques de la vie *fashionable*—la vie de paresseux—pour en indiquer le remède dans un travail toujours pénible aussitôt qu'on le cherche sérieusement. En faisant cette réflexion le souvenir m'est revenu d'un petit Conte de George Sand que j'avais lu quelques années auparavant, dont la scène se passait là ou je me trouvais alors, dans les Pyrénées, et dont les caractères et les incidents étaient d'une simplicité qui se prêtait beaucoup à mes besoins. Aussitôt je me suis décidé de le prendre pour base, et j'écrivais en trois jours les six premiers Cantos de *Lucile* la-dessus. Là je m'arretais, puis ce qu'en attendant plusieurs événements sont subitement arrivés pour interrompre un travail que je n'avais entrepris que pour échapper à des soucis journaliers et pourvoir à un besoin d'argent imminent.

character I was able to study calmly and thoroughly appreciate, and who was in many ways extremely interesting to me, I persuaded myself that I was in love with her, because I *wished* to be so, and because I associated with that idea the thought of a settled home and a calmer future.

On his return to the Hague, after parting with his mother in Paris, he accepted an invitation to stay with this lady's family. They now encouraged a renewal of his courtship, and in a short time he proposed again, and was this time accepted. The news of the engagement was received by Sir Edward Bulwer with unmitigated disapproval. He objected to his son marrying a foreigner, and a portrait of the lady which he saw in no way propitiated him in her favour. He thought the face indicative of a hard and calculating nature, and felt convinced that marriage with such a woman would lead to a tragedy not less complete perhaps than his own. He suspected that her parents had encouraged the engagement from purely worldly motives, in the belief that Sir Edward would provide his only son with a handsome income, and he was consequently determined not to help the marriage forward by any superfluous generosity. He now gave his son an allowance of £500 a year; to this he was willing to add £100 on the event of his marrying, but more than this he would not do. A disagreement ensued on the question of the marriage settlements. Sir Edward refused to pledge himself to provide for younger children, on the chance of his son dying before him. The Dutch Baron on his part refused to let his daughter marry unless some such pledge were made. Neither father would yield an inch to the other. The young lady finally decided that she could not act against her parents' wishes, and the engagement was broken off.

Robert Lytton, who had readily believed in the genuineness and disinterestedness of the girl's affection for him, felt bitterly pained at his father's attitude of suspicion, opposition, and want of sympathy. In his eyes this was to inflict a cruel wrong on the being in whose nobility he had an undoubting faith; its effect was to stimulate all his feelings of affection, in his eager desire to compensate her for such treatment by his own loyalty and tenderness. He argued with his father with despairing earnestness, but quite in vain; and at one moment made a desperate attempt to secure the necessary pecuniary arrangement by a proposal to his publishers which he suggested to John Forster, namely, that Chapman & Hall should have the copyright of all his works, present and future, on condition that, in the improbable event of his father surviving him, they should hand over the sum of £5000 to his widow! When, however, the young lady herself consented to relinquish the engagement, not apparently with any great heart-pang, the situation presented itself to him in a new light. He accepted her dismissal, and, when the bitterness of the whole incident was past, was able to look back with thankfulness to the fact that he had been saved from this marriage.

Early in the spring of this year (1859) he was appointed Second Secretary of Embassy at Vienna. His engagement still held good when he took up his new post, and, thinking that his wife would soon join him, he hired a much larger apartment than was required for his bachelor wants, and furnished it also at much greater expense than he would otherwise have done. When the engagement was broken off, he sold the apartment and the furniture, but, of course, at a considerable loss, and found himself consequently very much out of pocket. The necessity for retrieving these losses made him go back once

more, and with redoubled energies, to the task of completing *Lucile*. His father, with whom relations of sympathy and affection had now been re-established, showed a keener and more hearty interest in the composition of this poem, than he had yet done for any of his son's literary undertakings. They met at the watering-place of Baden. *The Strange Story* had just been published, and Robert Lytton's interest in the success of this novel (the story of which he had first heard from Sir Edward's lips as a dream that he had dreamed), was not more keen or appreciative than the interest which the elder man showed in his son's poem. Canto by canto they worked at it together, Sir Edward criticising scene by scene and suggesting alterations. Some of these suggestions were so eminently characteristic of the novelist that I cannot resist the temptation of quoting one as a specimen. The last book of the poem which introduces the incident of the second generation—the love story between Lord Alfred Vargrave's son and the niece of the Duc de Luvois—had not yet been completed. Sir Edward draws a picture of the way this situation should be worked out :—

"The young man ought to be a short and beautiful sketch—he has all the earnestness and purity which his father lacked—where he loves it is deep, silent, and for life. The girl might be a more joyous, vigorous, practical nature, but equally innocent—make a very innocent Poet and Virgin picture of their love which contrasts the worldlier and hardier loves of the preceding actors. (2) An idea! He might be a sort of type of the Poetical in Nature, she of the Healthful and Joyous in Nature. The existence of the one incomplete without the other. I think I see a beautiful close. These two young people kneeling near the old Gothic chapel. The open doors showing the ancestral tombs—the

stained windows—the Duc blessing them—the setting sun on their locks."

His son accepted the suggestion of the sunset, but made it the framework of a finer picture—the solitary figure of the French soldier who had finally won his hardest battle, and conquered himself. The sunset typified the glory of the victory, but also the completeness of the end of life for him.

"Honest love, honest sorrow,
Honest work for the day, honest hope for the morrow,
Are these worth nothing more than the hand they make weary,
The heart they have sadden'd, the life they leave dreary?
Hush! The sevenfold Heavens to the voice of the Spirit
Echo: He that o'ercometh shall all things inherit. . . .

In the twilight, longwhile
Eugène de Luvois with a deep thoughtful smile
Linger'd, looking, and listening, lone by the tent.
At last he withdrew, and night closed as he went."

On his return to Vienna after this time with his father at Baden, he writes:—.

"I shall keep the most delightful recollections of this little holiday, which had only one fault—that it was so short. I wish I could tell you now better than I felt able to tell you, when we were together, how touched and grateful I am for your kind and valuable attention to *Lucile*. The sincere kindness with which you so fully entered into the matter, all your trouble about it, and interest in it, has gone straight to my heart, and I cannot speak or think of this without great emotion. Your advice and assistance has been and will be of the *utmost* value to me. Whatever merit the book may now have will be entirely owing to you; and there is only one thing that weighs on me—the shame of profiting so largely by your genius, and getting a credit for its result which I shall in no way deserve. If when the book is completed you see, in its remaining faults, nothing which

would make you dislike to have it associated with your name, I wish you would add one other kindness to the rest, and let me dedicate it to you. I ask this with great diffidence, knowing that at the best there may be things in it you would not like to father, but I wish I could make known what in other respects it owes to you."

To this his father replied :—

"I am truly thankful, my dear son, for your most kind and tender reference to your short visit. It gave me unfeigned delight to see you, and convince myself of the healthful state of your feelings after so severe a trial. You seem to me better and stronger than I ever remember to have seen you. Take care and keep the health thus gained. My dear boy, I need not say that I should be most sensibly flattered and pleased by the dedication of your poem . . . (but) there must be no reference to my suggestions, for this would provoke critics against the work, nor would it be just to you. Every author has a right to consult friends, and it in no degree detracts from his own originality to do so. When I wrote plays, I was infinitely more indebted to Macready for dramatic hints than you are to me for hints in construction. And here, though some little amendments in construction will, I hope, lift up the interest, yet the real merit of the poem is in its poetry, in its incommunicable secret of form, in which I can give you no hint, for I have not that secret in verse, though to some extent in prose."

Writing to his son in August 1859, Sir Edward Lytton says of *Lucile* :—

"On the whole, making all the drawbacks necessary, and foreseeing immense scope for critical severities here and there which can't be met with without recasting the whole style—on the whole, I say I can remember no work of such *promise* since *Werter*. It reminds me of

Werter, I don't know why, except that it is the voice of the Age, and that it indicates a wondrous wealth in the author. At times the play of the vocabulary reminds me of Goethe himself in his best days of poetry. You may rely on *fame* for the poem. Grudge no labour, here and there, in the important parts."

Afterwards the author of *Lucile* lived to despise this offspring of his early genius, but the father's prophecy proved true. Fame it did obtain, and it is still perhaps one of the most popular poems in America.[1] In another letter Sir Edward writes:—

"I send you some proofs I have read through. I can see very little to revise. The fault is incurable. It is in the wonderful excess of richness. There are too many words to one truth. But so far as I have thus read, I feel more and more the ease, brightness, and lightness of the whole. It has the indefinite thing *Charm*."

Lucile was completed by the end of the year, and published by Chapman & Hall in the summer of 1860. It was at once pounced upon by the press, denounced as a plagiarism, and much more severely criticised than the previous works. "As to *Lucile*," he writes to his father, "I regard it as a failure, so far as the reviews are concerned; but fully agree with you that if it eventually wins the public, the sentence of the reviews matters not a rush." The story was deliberately founded on a novel of George Sand, *Lavinia*, and this was fully acknowledged in a preface Robert Lytton wrote for the first edition, but which, on Sir Edward's advice, he suppressed, to his own lasting regret. Referring, in a letter to John Forster, to an offensive notice which appeared in the *Literary Gazette*, he thus states the facts of the case:[2]—

[1] Where it has been published in a penny edition.
[2] March 11, 1861.

When I was attached at Paris some years ago, a French lady, a friend of mine, with whom I was intimate, and who was herself a *femme de lettres*, read to me once when I was ill a little French story, of which the scene was laid among the Pyrenees, and of which the incidents were, with very slight variation, those contained in the first part of *Lucile*. The story, of which I did not then know the authorship, and which I presumed to be one of the numerous French novelettes which come out every day, delighted and struck me by the great grace and delicacy of its composition, and the descriptions here and there of natural scenery, which appeared to me to show minute observation and to be very superior to those which occur in the general run of such books. Afterwards when I was at Luchon, among the scenes described in this little story, and seeking an occupation of the mind and hands, this story recurred to my memory with great freshness and vividness as connected with the very scenes I was then viewing. . . . I did not hesitate to take the incidents of the French story as a basis on which to build the poem. I began it one summer morning in a moment of impulse, and very rapidly sketched out the whole of the first part of the book, taking and reproducing, as faithfully as my memory enabled me to do, whatever had most struck me in the way of incident or description in the prose romance. But when I had gone half-way, I felt that the characters had insensibly assumed a somewhat different idiosyncrasy and shape of their own, under my hands, and that the very graceful but slight framework of the French story was insufficient to work out and give full scope to the purpose which had grown up with the poem, and the complete development either of the hero or the heroine as they expanded themselves into something fuller than the sketches which first suggested their existence. I therefore conceived the general idea of the second part, and for that purpose introduced into the first part the English banker, &c. After I had read to you and my

father the first pages of the poem and had resolved to continue it, I worked out the second part as I had originally conceived it, up to the fifth canto of it. . . . I afterwards ascertained that the French story, which I followed in the first part, was by G. Sand, and that I had reproduced three or four of the points in it, which had most impressed me, with singular accuracy. But if, as the writer of this article assumes, I had sat down with the book before me, methodically to translate its French prose into English anapæsts, I should probably have been unable to write a line, and should soon have thrown by so arid and thankless a task. When the book was in proof, and when I met my father at Baden or Wildbad, I mentioned to him that the first part of the plot of the poem was borrowed from a French novel, and asked him whether it might not be well, to prevent the possibility of misunderstanding, to state as much in the preface, and explain why I had generally drawn the incidents from French sources among current literature. He emphatically replied no; that the position of the poet is not that of the novelist. The poet is perfectly authorised in taking his plot right and left from any source that avails him. His originality is in his poetry, not in his story, and that long explanations were best avoided, &c. I own that I entirely agreed, and do still, in this view of the legitimate licence of the poet. If I entered into no prefatory explanation of the genesis of the poem, it was from no wish to conceal it, as a *theft*. I was always prepared for any critic to say this incident is from such a source, that from another, but not for any critic to assume that this constituted a guilty proceeding on the part of the poet, who is perfectly ready to acknowledge it, or that the whole merit of the poem could be made to rest on the question of how far the plot had a foreign origin. Nothing in all this appears to me to invalidate what was stated in the dedication. For the attempt to embody ordinary superficial life abroad in a poem of this length, the mode of treatment, the general adherence to

narrative, and the general form and metre, &c., of the poem is, so far as I am yet aware, perfectly novel. What is your opinion? What do you advise me to do in the matter? The simple statement of the truth appears to me innocent and satisfactory; but it would probably be received with derision by the writer of this article.

Not till the third edition of *Lucile* was published in 1867 did Robert Lytton make any public statement of the facts recorded in this letter. He then embodied them in a preface which is incorporated in the latest edition now before the world.

The following letters on the subject of the poem passed between its author and the Brownings:—

From MR. BROWNING. *Siena, August* 20, 1860.

Your scrap of letter was followed a day or two after by the poem it promised, and truest thanks for both. I had been very anxious to see *Lucile*, and rather avoided critical notices with their extracts—though many a fresh and sparkling line made itself felt at all hazards. I think your general power is increased and brought into new channels; there is wit, use of the world; wisdom too, and the old music and pathos, only the general dance of the metre fatigues, perhaps. There are backgrounds of scenery of great beauty and finish. My impression of the whole is; going to the figures in the picture, that you detail effects too minutely, instead of leaving the causes (the actions, passions, words, and deeds of the "figures") to suggest the effects to the reader: that is the strong and succinct way, at least. I want you to be really great because it is *in* you, clearly enough. By effects, I mean moral as well as merely material effects, and always, by success, speaking of you, I want and expect the highest of its kind. But this "strong way" makes short work with a poem, and gets very little reward beside the greatest. The end

is—if you don't make a poet, you will have murdered a real specimen of that same. I wish also your men were stronger; is it in nature to truly say every now and then to a woman, "Had you held out a hand to me *then*, I should have been saved, whereas, &c. &c."? Did ever man or woman really save *so* a strong man? It seems to me like the point in cockney horsemanship of pulling your horse up by the curb when he stumbles—it being still doubtful to me whether your curb does it, or the brute's resolution and resource. See what Landor wrote on returning me the poem: you know—or *do* you know?—that he is here, stone's cast off. He admires you enormously.

We should be spending a pleasant summer here, in an old, cool, quiet villa, but that my wife is kept wretched by fears for the event of a sister's illness. She would be well otherwise. Write a word, dear Lytton, when the old feeling prompts you, and be sure you have no better wisher and affectionate watcher than—Yours ever faithfully, ROBERT BROWNING.

From MRS. BROWNING. *Villa Alberti, Siena, August* 19, 1860.

MY DEAR LYTTON,—We should have written long since about *Lucile*. Robert has waited for me, and I have waited for what has not come in any satisfactory degree, a little ease of mind about the illness in England of one near and dear to me. Now at last, however, I must write. I can't let you think that I am indifferent about a book of yours. I could not be so, if the book had less beauty and power than this has, nor if I were sadder still than I am. You have a true faculty, and there is true proof of it here,—proof, too, of a largeness and grasp of hand of which you had given no previous evidence. I don't like your form—the rhythmical, no, not at all. It seems to me a mistake altogether, nor do I think you have altogether made the best of it. When

one winds such silk one should be careful not to tangle it, because *that* adds a sort of irritation to the sense of monotony. See how impertinent I have courage to be. But your poem can bear it. And you are able to stand clear on such points; you who *can* be so musical, have such elasticity of expression, and power over your material—very striking is the management of your dialogue, and in parts also of the narrative. It seems to me that you must beware of this copiousness, however, lest it beguile you into *diffuseness*. You are not concentrated enough; you draw out rather than strike out with deep, close strokes; that is my impression, at least. Perhaps what is most above criticism in the volume is the descriptive part; it is exquisite, and you have exceeded yourself in it. For the rest, you can be very witty, very tender, very pathetic; but readers like myself miss, through all the good and true thoughts scattered up and down, the sight of an earnest intention. I don't want a moral in a frame; but I am uncomfortable in feeling a doubt whether the poet's levity or his gravity be the more genuine. I had no sympathy with Lord Alfred, and when he cries about the loss of his wife's fortune, I think he might have cried on other heads. I am a woman, you see. It seems to me that losing money (even his wife's) should never make a man cry. Then the dropping into the next generation does not please me; that is a fault in art, I think. Upon the whole, I have talked too much of faults and too little of the beauties which are uppermost. The reason is perhaps that while I have felt and applauded all the beauty, I am sensible to myself of a certain disappointment and discontent with the work as a whole, or (to put it more graciously and quite as veraciously) of a feeling that the writer ought, with his means, to produce something deeper, more intense, with a stronger hold on the essential life of us, the life beyond and above life. Here, I do not see where the writer's convictions are. He means well somehow; but what is the well he means?

The colour of his convictions is doubtful, which, let us all be sure, is a weakness in a work of art, just as it is an infirmity in a man. Have I spoken, and will you be very, very vexed with me, Lytton? Or shall I be forgiven for the sake not merely of the affectionate interest I always shall feel in your career, but of the real admiration with which I recognise your brilliant gifts? Guess that I am put out (who knows?) by your manly way of disposing of "women of genius," who, dropping (through manifold afflictions) from the right end of their creation as ministering "Lady Alfreds," are made sisters of charity as a matter of stringent necessity, the Luciles going the way of the Evangelines, . . . to the hospital!

"Born to nurse, and to soothe, and to solace."

But I join Robert in thanking you very much for this book, which it was so kind of you to send us. Go on and win laurels, and let us congratulate you more and more. Let me say one word. I printed lately a thin slice of a book which I did not send you. Yet your name was down on my list. But I heard that your sympathies lay opposite (as British sympathies do generally), and so I abstained from forcing you into an obligation for a disagreeable gift. That was the whole history. Don't think I forgot you or neglected you, however "biologised by infernal spirits," according to William Howitt. See *spiritual* magazine.

We are here in a great lonely villa while the summer passes, looking out for earthquakes and Garibaldi. There was an earthquake just before we came, and the weather is said to indicate others coming. Garibaldi is come probably by this time—as near as Naples. The Storys live in a villa opposite, a mile off, and Isa Blagden is at a ten minutes' walk.

But this summer has the heart of a winter to me. Heavy and sad. Robert writes and redes.

Write to me sometimes.—Affectionately yours,

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING.

ROBERT LYTTON *to* MRS. BROWNING.
Baden, September 3, 1860.

MY VERY DEAR FRIEND,—I shall very inadequately tell you how great a pleasure it was to me to hear from you again, and what best and truest of pleasures to receive from you a letter so kind to me, and so full of yourself—I mean, so full of what you are, in heart and mind. I am only grieved (and truly and heartily grieved, believe me) that of the little you *do* tell me of yourself the news should be so sad. Nothing that affects or concerns you however remotely will ever be indifferent to me, and I hope I do not claim more than the privilege of an old friend, and a very loving one, in taking to my heart some share in your anxiety. God grant to your sister health, and to you speedy comfort on her behalf.

Thank you very warmly for all you say about *Lucile*. You use this very slipshod muse of mine with the tenderness of one who knew her in her cradle. I have written worse poems and weaker poems than *Lucile*, but none, I must frankly own, that I, myself, less loved and liked. The merit of the book appears to me this—that there is throughout it a slovenly evidence of power (power rather possible than proved) which would induce me, if it were the work of another man, to say, "There is more in his mind than there is in his book." The faults are obvious —the metre is detestable and disagrees with our language. The management of it was a *tour de force*, the success of which is probably very partial. But the attempt involved that kind of difficulty which was only to be met by a "rush." Polish was out of the question. The main defect of the book is, I think, precisely that which you have pointed out—diffuseness and redundancy. Too much of the explanatory system of the spelling-book—"This is a butterfly," "That is an elephant," under very indifferent woodcuts. The weakness of all the characters was intended, but it was a mistake in conception. I began the poem one summer morning in a fit of high

spirits, and wrote three or four books of it without drawing breath, without any proposed object or premeditated plot. When I had got thus far my mood changed, and I felt great disgust at the metre to which I had bound myself, and flung it aside. A year later, Forster, my father, and another friend to whom I showed the MS., appeared so much struck by it, that, urged by them, I took it up again, and resolved to finish it. I meant it to be no representation of life, in the large and catholic sense of the word (as some have supposed), but a fanciful sketch of the most superficial aspects of life in certain phases of society; of this I think it is in the main a true representation—the question remains whether the thing was worth representing at all. . . . Lucile should represent that sort of intellect, more common to women than men, which, whilst it is of an order richer and fuller than belongs to mere talent, is essentially unproductive, uncreative. I know one or two women of whom Lucile is a fair type, who think as genius thinks and feel as genius feels, but cannot create as genius creates—neither writing books nor painting pictures. Heroic natures, but insufficient, needing to complement themselves with another, not reaching the highest type, in which intellectually there is no sex. I look back on the book and see that there is in it too much attempt to generalise—too much talk of "the world," of "genius," of "the heart," of "man," and "woman"—which sort of talk is apt to run into showy falsehood.

By the way, from one of your criticisms I would wish to reclaim Lord Alfred. He does not cry at the loss of his wife's fortune, but in recalling the abuse of his own as regards her. The intelligence brought by his cousin reaches him just as he is pricked by Lucile's words, alarmed about his wife, and dissatisfied with himself. It is self-reproach, not loss of fortune, that he is supposed to feel, and the fear that he has flung away the means of placing beyond the reach of fortune the happiness confided to him—*hinc illae lachrymae.* But, even for this,

he is perhaps too lachrymose. I have talked to you too much of my own book. I have a great deal to say about yours, and a wish to say it so great as to make me hope you will not resent a garrulity which is much more "impertinent" as from me to you, than a hundred criticisms far less kind and forbearing than your last on any work of mine can ever be. I have read and re-read many times your *Poems before Congress*. I did not write to you after my first reading of the Poems, because my impressions were confused in everything but a vague sense of some disappointment at the form, and more antagonism to the substance. I will own that I closed the book with a sense of irritation not allayed by the great beauty of one or two passages in it. But your poems have the merit inherent to all that is intrinsically good in art. The more they are studied, the more their beauties are apparent, the more they command admiration and haunt the memory. Their beauty as verse is much greater than I at first recognised. There are fine flashing and keen strokes throughout. And the "Italian Lady" and the "dance at the Cascine" are very impressive and striking features. But . . . but—(will you see in the hardihood of this avowal enough of the true veneration which goes with it to enable you to forgive it?)—I still find my mind opposed to what I conceive to have been yours in writing the book. Do not set me down at once in the number of some critics that I have read, whose obvious spleen appears to have wilfully misinterpreted your text. I start with a strong doubt as to how far politics are fair or fitting subject for poetry—*as* politics. True, they have suggested stirring war-songs and stinging satires. But this sort of politics is more in name than in fact, I think. The poet who sings in face of an enemy's fleet, or after the trumpets of a departing host, is in reality dealing with a simple and manifest emotion, upon which discussion cannot be supposed to exist. The satirist is rarely the best poet or the best politician. Your poems, though, are not mere *Io*

Pæans, not mere satires, they include the consideration of many debateable questions, such, for instance, as that of international intervention, and associate politics in a larger sense with poetry in a higher. It is the compatibility of this union which, appreciating the strength of your convictions, and honouring the courage with which it is expressed, I feel a doubt about. I say only "a doubt," for it exists only in a vague sense of something incongruous that hurts the pleasurable sensation derived from art, and not in any reason that I can logically render to myself as to *why* I feel this incongruity.

I cannot yet give up the consideration of politics as a science—a science which, for the misfortune of mankind, is still in a very empirical state—but yet a science—to be approached by the reason, and that somewhat humbly, since we know so little. If so, it is clearly not the best subject for poetry which deals with passion and sentiment. At any rate, the poet, writing politics, accepts the political criticism which he challenges—and then, if you do not agree with the politician, you are deprived of much of the pleasure you expected from the poet. Then, too, the very force and intensity of diction which belongs to poetry (and of which you are a powerful master) tends to irritate the reader, where it seems applied against his own doubts, dispositions, or prejudices, upon subjects respecting which, at least, the world at large has not made up its mind. The poem is so strongly worded that it reads almost like a denunciation of those who do not fully share the political views it expresses—all is black or white, and the vigorous rush and dramatic rapidity and picturesqueness of some of the lyrics necessarily excludes the argument which convinces, or the detailed discussion which at least conciliates and flatters, a political dissentient. I suppose this is why my first impressions were harsh and distasteful, and that it was not till I read it again and again, that I fully embraced the poetical beauty of the book.

I am afraid you will think from what I have said that I am a Tory rampant and retrograde, and altogether

at odds with you upon politics. I don't think, however, that we start from different points or by opposite roads, only, perhaps, that I only go half-way with you. So let me say my say about some of the points you touch on, only you must not consider my words as imposing or intruding anything on your view, only exposing my own, and very imperfectly. I cannot realise, or adopt with satisfaction, your picture of Louis Napoleon any more than I can that drawn by Victor Hugo. Both views of the man . . . (pray, pray forgive me) . . . appear to me pushed into those extremes which lie beyond the exact truth—so far as one may guess at the character of a man one does not deal with nor come near to. I regard Louis Napoleon as a man of undoubted genius, and unquestionably as a *great constructor*. There are evidences of this throughout France. If he has gagged the Press, and silenced speech, he has also freed capital, and called into existence a material prosperity that speaks for itself—and for him. And it may be justly said of him that he has only made himself the master of France, to make France the mistress of Europe. I do not look upon him merely as an adroit and reckless adventurer who has played double or quits with Fortune. For I credit him not only with a conviction in his own destiny, but with an equal and an honest conviction that it is the best destiny for France. He has large views and generous enthusiasms, and I do not believe his ends to be selfish because I see his means to be unscrupulous. No scrupulous man could have done what he has done. But an unscrupulous man is not necessarily a bad man. Still, although without sophistry, in the enthusiasm for a great end, a man may weigh but very hastily, and esteem as comparatively unimportant the means by which it is to be realised, there is a maxim about this of which the world is very naturally mistrustful. He is doubtless ambitious for France; but the ambition of France is a menace for Europe; because from geographical and physical causes it must be a territorial ambition.

I don't think the man insincere, but I think his policy insincere from obvious causes, and I should therefore be glad to see it watched with vigilance, and provided against with courteous but cautious tenacity. I think that any considerable increase of territory on the part of France, or even any paramount political influence along the shores of the Mediterranean, would be a misfortune. I have no doubt, for instance, that the Emperor is perfectly sincere in saying that he does not want the Rhine. At this moment I see no reason why he should want it. But France is always ready to want it (a project for its annexation, with the concurrence of Russia, existed in the portfolio of the virtuous Chateaubriand, as the last card of Charles X.), and there may come a moment when Louis Napoleon must be ready to do what France wants. If Prussia, abandoned by us (which I trust may never happen), should ever be constrained to yield to such a project, her compensatory increase of population from the German States could only (I am convinced) be maintained by a total change of system, which would place her in complete dependence on Russia on the one side, and France on the other; and if then, those two powers should be tempted to agree on any aggressive policy in the East, we must prepare for a deadly struggle at fearful odds—Prussia, disabled or driven against us, Austria extinct, Denmark hostile—or say good-bye to India, and live on sufferance. No man can be absolutely insincere who has intense convictions, and Louis Napoleon has these, no doubt, but he seems to me a practical enthusiast, not like that poor monomaniac Mazzini, but like Cromwell and Mahomet—neither of them positively bad men, nor positively good men, but both of them great men. When the whole world mistrusts a man, the whole world is rarely very far wrong. You see I am not really *very* rabid against him (sad and significant, as are such things as the *procès Paradol*), but perhaps I am over mistrustful of hero-worship, lest it should unconsciously degenerate into

devil-worship, or the substitution of personality for principle. What is strong and striking is not necessarily good and true. What is commonplace from general acceptance is not necessarily false, I think.

With regard to all the present movement in Italy which has constantly referred my thoughts to you (knowing how much you must have taken it to your heart, and not forgetful of Casa Guidi), you know I never was, and think I never shall be a lover of the Austrian or the Bourbon in that land of lands. I shall be heartily glad to see Italy permanently free and pure Italian from end to end—all I dread is the substitution of French for Austrian supremacy there. I am apprehensive lest Piedmont be now only so far strengthened as to be mischievous as a vassal of France, and not yet sufficiently strengthened to be valuable as a great independent power. All, or nearly all the Piedmontese agents in the East have been vexatious and troublesome—mere French or Russian tools. But all this would cease, I think, if Piedmont were at the end of her just ambition; and I am most anxious to see her enlarged and strengthened to the fullest extent, a barrier as much against France as against Austria. I have great doubts, however, as to whether the diverse nationalities are capable of permanent cohesion, and will rest undivided when the pressure of external danger and imminent necessity has fallen off, and the attention of Europe turned elsewhere. These are misgivings, not ill wishes, and a great experiment is being made to which I cry God-speed, and the success of which I shall welcome all the more warmly if it should be obtained by Italy herself, and the unsupported sword of Garibaldi. He is at present the only hero to whom I am ready to do homage without mistrust. Really a fine fellow. Will he realise the dream of Rienzi? and with greater integrity than Rienzi ever showed? I think we shall hold hands off. But if he attacks Venetia he will have a sharp tussle for it, and I don't see how any responsible Government can

overtly help him. Then will be the time (if it comes) for Italy to show what she can do for herself. As for Cavour, I can't swallow him without spoonfuls of salt—I esteem him a shifty, tricksy fellow—but I suppose he who goes to work in earnest must not mind about dirtying his hands a little.[1]

If I understand you well I cannot but think you are not quite fair to the rifle movement.[2] For me, I view it with fear as well as hope. It is a very serious experiment to arm so large a class of the population, and one of which the results cannot yet be calculated. And as for invasion, I am persuaded there is no chance of it at this moment, and I doubt the chance of it at any time, so that beside the risk of the experiment itself there is the risk of the reaction. But these are mere considerations of utility and prudence. The movement itself is one which I regard with any feeling but that of scorn or rebuke. That in a country highly civilised as ours, where human life has become so precious, and where time has the value of gold, lawyers, artists, tradesmen, and others, in all ranks, dependent on the peaceful professions, should at the mere suspicion of danger to their country cheerfully and at once forego their habits, and give up their bodies and their time to the defence of the Commonwealth, with no prospect of glory and some of ridicule before them, is, I think, most creditable to any country, and as an Englishman I feel proud of it. Say the danger (as I think) chimerical—so much greater to my thinking the merit. In what country, when even the danger has entered the doors, has the same taken place? I do not know whether I have rightly interpreted a verse of yours on this matter—perhaps I altogether mistake your meaning in it, but if it be that it would have been nobler and better to have armed and fought for the Italians before we armed for our-

[1] Robert Lytton's final estimate of Cavour was very different. He looked upon him and Bismarck as the two greatest statesmen of his age.

[2] The volunteer movement in England.

selves, I can't go with you in that opinion. It seems to me that a man should protect his own wife in preference to the most unfortunate of unprotected ladies. But in any case I think we had no ground for interference in Italy, and no right to interfere. I think a wide distinction should be drawn between the moral support volunteered by the public opinion of a free people, and the material support afforded by a responsible Government to conflicting parties abroad. No Government has a right to devote one fraction of the resources of a people of whose power it is the delegate, and of whose welfare the guardian, to any but the well-ascertained interests of that people to whom it is responsible. It has been called a selfish maxim, but the more I reflect on it, the more I am convinced of its truth and justice—that no state should ever act officially beyond the region of its own interests, moral and material. I feel quite sure that a policy so restricted is best not only for the individual state but for mankind at large, for interests may be ascertained and fixed, and the interests of each have a relation to the interests of all. But sentiments fluctuate, and it is no paradox to say that in human affairs principles or "ideas" do also. The sentiment of to-day may not be the sentiment of to-morrow—yesterday legitimacy, to-day democracy, to-morrow despotism—all may be popular according to circumstances, and it is ten to one that direct intervention on behalf of a sentiment however noble, or an abstract principle however just, will prove to be mischievous intervention in the end. What was once done for the Bourbons in Europe, and again for Greek nationality—two sad failures—is to the point. And once you admit intervention on the right side, you cannot exclude it on the wrong side, and what follows?—the deadliest of all conflicts, a general conflict for principles! No one has acted more entirely (I might say more unscrupulously) on the maxim that bases policy on interest than Louis Napoleon himself.

It would be easy, surely, to show that the war with Austria was undertaken mainly, if not exclusively, in the interests of France, and notably of the French Ruler. Nay, as much was confessed in defence of that hurried peace, which avowed that the continuance of the war was incompatible with those interests. And, whatever the abstract merits of the cause, I must say that to my thinking never was quarrel so unscrupulously and pertinaciously picked, nor peace so palpably obtained on false pretences. To be sure cases may arise in which the actual existence of a state may depend on the maintenance of an abstract principle abroad—as, for instance, if free Constitutions were on the point of being crushed out all over Europe, we might fairly consider whether, if we did not maintain them by arms, our own turn might not follow, and find us without allies—or the religious wars in Germany, where the maintenance of a principle *vi et armis* was life and death to the states concerned. But, however unsettled the question, I fancy all authorities on international obligations will agree in principle, that intervention is only to be justified by immediate danger to the party intervening. Our best publicists seem of one mind that utility—not abstract ethics—is the only safe basis for legislation at home, and I think the same rule may be carried into foreign policy. Govern as little as possible, and interfere as little as possible is what I would say to all Governments, and leave abstract ideas to establish themselves, without protection or impediment. Well, I have talked a great deal too much—on all subjects. But it is so long since I have had any talk with you that it is hard to leave off. I fear I shall have seemed very pragmatical, but I don't mean to be so. I write with difficulty, for I have sprained my ankle, and have to be upon a sofa, can only get a sidelong hold of the table, and must write in a sort of crab-fashion. Pray, pray do let me sometimes hear from you, or at least of you, and however cold-blooded may seem my senti-

ments on all other matters, do not doubt the warmth and heartiness of those which I feel towards you—and yours. There are none I more revere, and very very few I love so much.

Do you know there is a young Lord Loughboro' here, who raves about *Aurora Leigh*, says he thinks it equal to Shakespeare, quotes from it, catches some of its eloquence when he speaks about it, and never goes anywhere without it. You have also a most ardent admirer in Captain Maxse,[1] who distinguished himself in the Crimea, and has written a novel. He talks of going to Italy this winter—Oh, how I wish I could go too—I am beginning to pine for the Apennines. But they are far away from me. It is late. I have tired myself, and I daresay bored you yet more. I say good night, and pray God bless you, and keep you my friend.—I am, yours most entirely,

R. LYTTON.

[1] Afterwards Admiral Maxse.

CHAPTER VI

VIENNA

1860–1863, AET. 28–31

> The mission of genius on Earth! To uplift,
> Purify and confirm, by its own gracious gift,
> The world, in despite of the world's dull endeavour
> To degrade, and drag down, and oppose it for ever.
>
> —*Lucile.*

IN January 1860, Robert Lytton was sent from Vienna to Belgrade to take temporary charge of the consulate there in the place of the existing Consul, M. Fonblanque, whom he found "dying," and the consulate itself "in the devil's own mess." Milosch, the Servian prince, was a character full of interest to the young poet-diplomatist—"a sort of small Jenghiz Khan," who had probably murdered a dozen men in the course of the strange career "which had changed him from a pig-driver to a prince." His attitude of insubordination to the authority of the Turkish Sultan, and his acts of maladministration presaged a coming insurrection. While the Porte and the Western Powers looked upon this Servian prince as the chief source of danger, Mr. Lytton considered him but a tool in the hands of Russia, who secretly with Austria was encouraging his attitude of discontent and aggression.

Sir Henry Bulwer, now Ambassador at Constantinople, was highly pleased with his nephew's despatches during this mission.

From SIR HENRY BULWER TO ROBERT LYTTON. 1860.

"SIR,—I have forwarded home most of the despatches relative to Servian affairs which you have addressed to this Embassy, and which I thought would interest Her Majesty's Government, and I have expressed to Her Majesty's Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, what I also convey to you, viz. my high opinion of the talent and industry displayed in those despatches, which I may fairly say have conveyed to this Embassy, in a remarkably lucid manner, more information concerning Servian affairs than it had at any previous time obtained."

In October of the same year (1860) Robert Lytton was again suddenly sent to Belgrade by the Foreign Office at home, immediately after the bombardment of the town, to "keep the peace between the Turks and Servians till the close of the conference at Constantinople."[1] He was again successful in accomplishing the object of a delicate mission, and was "highly commended" by the Embassy at Vienna, and the Government at home.

Soon after his arrival at Vienna, he was presented to the Emperor and Empress of Austria. "She is perfectly lovely," he writes of the Empress, "like one of Raphael's virgins, the embodiment of youth and innocence, a face so young and radiant that it saddens me to think of the dark background in which I seem to have seen it." The last part of this sentence has a prophetic ring. The tragedy which formed the background to that beautiful face deepened round her till the years fulfilled the doom of her unhappy family, and she herself fell a victim to the knife of a fanatical assassin.

[1] To Browning, October 1860.

To Mr. Motley. *Vienna*, 1860.

Austria is a slow power, moved by mediocre minds and always behind the time, but she acts on the movements of the European machine, as the lead in the timepiece, regulating and balancing the motion of the whole; take away the weight and how will the clock go?[1] Then all these grim raw races — Slav, Wallach, Rouman, Czec, and fifty others—springing up and rushing forward in all directions, frighten me a good deal. I don't see what's to become of "the old Gods."

To John Forster. *September* 29, 1861.

I never felt such lively interest in any foreign question as this of Hungary, which I think vital to the existence of an empire whose dissolution I should see with unaffected dismay. But the men who are managing everything here have eyes and see not, ears and will not hear, and are blind leaders of the blind.

Many lifelong friendships date from these Vienna days. Mr. Wilfrid Blunt has described the impression of his first meeting at this time with Robert Lytton.

"It was about this time that I first remember to have seen him. A young man of twenty-nine with a beautiful dreamy face and curly hair. I was passing through Vienna, a young unpaid *attaché* on my way from Constantinople, and had called at the Embassy and found him there with his friend Julian Fane and others in the Chancery. It was but a passing glimpse, but I like to recall it and the picture which remains in my mind of him as he sat writing, with one hand busy with his work,

[1] He may have been thinking of the couplet in the *Dunciad*—

"As clocks to weight their nimble motion owe,
The wheels above urged by the load below."

and his other caressing his black poodle's head. There was something typical in the attitude and the act."

Julian Fane, son of Lord Westmoreland, of whom Mr. Blunt speaks, was at this time First Secretary at the Vienna Embassy. His career, cut short by an early death, was one of brilliant promise. From Vienna he went as First Secretary to Paris, but resigned his appointment and retired from the diplomatic profession in 1867. He died of consumption in the year 1870. Before 1860, when he and Robert Lytton first became friends, he had published a small volume of poems and a prose sketch of Heine. His official writings were distinguished for their simplicity and lucidity of style, and his personal charm was unrivalled.

During the four years in which they were colleagues, Julian Fane and Robert Lytton held uninterrupted and daily intercourse with one another.

"From the first moment of my arrival in Vienna to the last of those four unforgotten years of my life, which it beautified and gladdened, his companionship became, and continued to be for me, the source of an ever-increasing intellectual and moral delight.

"His society was like the sunshine of an eternal summer on a land

> Where falls not hail, or rain, or any snow,
> Nor ever wind blows loudly.

"All in him was clear, and bright, and calm; but never monotonous; a perpetual play of happy influences: 'a meeting of sweet lights without a name.'" [1]

Together these two would take long rambles in the suburbs of the city of Vienna, or "trudge by

[1] Robert Lytton's *Life of Julian Fane.*

many a muddy street into the dim Jews' quarter of the town (those picturesque Vienna Jews of a day already gone by!)" Things seen or heard in these walks remained for ever identified in Lytton's mind with some anecdote or graceful fancy or witty word from the friend "whose companionship made all their charm."

"The staff of our Vienna Mission was at that time composed of some half a dozen young men who were all remarkable for their agreeable social qualities and high-bred manners; all of them cordially attached to each other and harmoniously working together; and all of them worthy representatives of a social type which is not very likely, under existing arrangements of the Diplomatic Service, to reappear in the ranks of it. The perfect harmony which then prevailed amongst the members of this Mission, as well as between them and their chief, was greatly promoted by the central influence of Julian Fane. His presence amongst us was incompatible with any kind of vulgarity, ill-temper, or coarseness. It effectually guaranteed the Minister against the possibility of disrespect on the part of his subordinates, whilst at the same time it imperceptibly impressed upon him the necessity of courtesy and consideration in his intercourse with them. This was the best security for efficiency in the general work of a Mission, every one of whose members had a corporate pride in the high character of it, and was animated by a sense of the obligation which is proverbially ascribed to noble-mindedness. We were all of us bachelors in those days; and when we did not dine at the table of our chief (where we *did* dine very frequently), it was our wont to dine together either at some restaurant, or else in each other's lodgings; most often in those of Julian Fane. His temperament made him lavishly hospitable. He carried into the consideration of all matters connected with cellar and kitchen the same exquisitely fastidious

taste that gave to his general character such affluent æsthetic susceptibilities. No man better knew how either to order or appreciate a good dinner. And how pleasant they were, those merry little dinners at his house! How careful the cookery, how easy the conversation! the wine so choice and old, the wit so young and fresh, and both so unstinted! Dinners of this kind are only possible in the pure light air of foreign life. In England we do not understand them, nor would it profit us if we did. In our heavy atmosphere, loaded, as it is, with so much moral, as well as material, carbon, both soul and body crave a stronger stimulant; and it is only the intoxication of party passion, or personal ambition, or fierce speculation, that can exhilarate our jaded powers of enjoyment. We even laugh in a hurry, as though the end of the world were at hand, and might catch us with the fool's-cap on. There is, in London, a feverish competition for the manufacture of jokes at so much per week; and no wonder that these poor jokes come into the world tired before they are born.

"Those lounging early after-dinner talks, in that little bachelor boudoir (of which the memory of Julian Fane so vividly recalls the image to my mind; with its pretty chintzes, and its flowers, and its piano, as well as its books and despatch-boxes, and all so fragrant with the fresh fumes of the lightest Turkish tobacco); those talks interspersed with snatches of music and song, or recitations of verse or prose; and broken up so soon in order not to miss the overture to the new opera or the first act of the new play; —how impossible to fancy anything of the kind under the solemn smoke of our business-burdened London!"[1]

It was not till the Vienna evening at the opera or theatre was over, and when at past midnight Julian Fane was to be found alone in dressing-gown and slippers at his own fireside, a cigar in his mouth and a book on his knee, that the really intimate inter-

[1] Robert Lytton's *Life of Julian Fane.*

course between himself and his friend would begin. Then till the small hours of the morning they would discuss some new philosophical treatise, or the last new poem, or wander away into the fields of classic literature, or together embark upon some joint literary composition. Upon one occasion when they bid each other good night at seven o'clock on a bright summer morning, Robert Lytton laughingly said, "It is only going to bed that either you or I will ever catch a sunstroke."

It was under these conditions that their joint poem of "Tannhäuser" was composed. It grew out of their common enthusiasm for the genius they both recognised in Wagner's great opera, which "prompted the composition and furnished the story of it."

"The experiment was suggested and commenced by Julian Fane; who started it with a certain number of lines, and passed these on to his fellow-workman for the addition of so many more to be completed before their next meeting. The charm of the undertaking was in the occasions it afforded for these pleasant meetings—and thus *à tour de rôle* by alternate contributions to a structure built on neutral ground, this little poem was rapidly completed in the course of a few evenings."[1]

To John Forster. 1861.

Each of us has written his own portion of the poem in the first instance quite independently of the other, without reference to his elaboration, assigning to himself his own bounds, and treating the subject, characters, &c., within those bounds, after his own fancy and according to his own judgment. Subsequently each portion of the work has been submitted to sharp and free criticism on

[1] Robert Lytton's *Life of Julian Fane.*

both sides, and though I have hardly had a change to suggest in Julian's work, I must honestly say that I think my own has derived much benefit from his objections and suggestions throughout, and that the necessity of keeping within close bounds and to a certain extent following another man's track and keeping in harmony with another man's style has been a salutary corrective to my natural predisposition to over diffuseness.

This history of the composition of "Tannhäuser" is enough to show that it was not regarded by its authors as a serious literary production, but "rather as an intellectual *tour de force* in which the style and spirit of the Tennysonian Idyll had been purposely imitated as the readiest and most popular vehicle for the utterance of impressions rendered vivid by an intense enjoyment of the music which it was the object of the poem to translate into words."

Being in the nature of "a literary sport in mask and domino," the friends were anxious in publishing this poem to preserve their anonymity. Julian Fane took the name of Neville Temple, suggested by his family motto, *Ne vile Fano*; and Robert Lytton that of Edward Trevor, the name by which he had signed his earliest poems in *Blackwood's Magazine*; *Trevor* being *Robert* written backwards with the *b* changed into a *v*.

Both authors were equally annoyed when the secret of their identity was discovered, and the critics attacked the poem as if it had been put forth as a serious literary effort. The sale of it, however, was unexpectedly rapid — a few months after its publication the first edition was sold out, and reviews of it appeared in the two quarterlies.

"An infamy and national disgrace," Robert Lytton wrote at the time, "that such a work as 'Tannhäuser' should receive an attention not vouchsafed

to the almost immeasurable genius of 'Saul' and 'Christmas Eve.'"

Another friend of this period was Mr. Motley, the American historian, who was then U.S. Minister at Vienna, where he won "golden opinions from all sorts of people" who were "not accustomed to see a civilised Yankee."

In the spring of 1861 the war between the Northern and Southern States of America commenced with the attack on Fort Sumter. Mr. Motley was a "violent Northerner," and delighted to find in his friend Lytton a warm sympathiser at a time when the cause of the South was almost universally espoused by Englishmen. In the opinion of Mr. Motley, "whatever the result of the present struggle — whether fatal to the Union or otherwise," it was impossible that fifty years could elapse without "the intense resentment existing against England in the North of America" finding vent in war!

A little later than this (March 1863) Robert Lytton was glad to hear that Browning also wished well to the cause of the North.

To John Forster.

If he thinks as I think, that they are now doing the finest thing they ever did or perhaps ever will do, whatever the result, a word from him to the world would come very graciously just now when all England is abusing and misrepresenting them, especially as an antidote to Mrs. Browning's (*then* merited) curse. And he would not be quite alone in any such utterance, for no less a person than J. S. Mill has spoken out often, bravely, and to the purpose. I wrote two sonnets on that subject, and gave them to Motley, who sent them to *Fraser*, but Froude, who edits it, would not

publish them, saying there were not three people in England who thought in that way, and that it was all nonsense. Motley was furious. . . . I cordially wish well to the North in the first effort it has yet made to shake off the slough of moral dirt in which it has been so long wallowing, and think of something nobler than the almighty dollar. The Yankees are now paying, I think, a heavy but not an unjust price for a bad past.

The poem of "Atlantis," published in *Chronicles and Characters* in 1867, expressed his feelings about the cause of the North, and Professor Henry Sidgwick once told me how he rejoiced to read that first expression in English literature of what he thought the true view on the subject.

To JOHN FORSTER. *April* 1862. *From a village near Vienna.*

O Spring! Spring! the ever new! How I bless God for thy sake! Strange! I cannot conceive, dear Forster, why men have so universally taken Winter for the death-picture, and Spring for the life-picture in Nature. It strikes me quite otherwise. In Winter I see, everywhere, Life as it is: the life of use and wont, and apathetic habit; the enduring need; the painful struggle with difficulty; the cramped energy; the long imprisonment; the want of warmth. *That* is Life. But Spring? No! all that boundless emancipation, the deep, deep exultation and triumph, the wonder, the novelty, the surprise of every movement, the fresh beginning of untried things —the escape from the staled and the spoiled experience, the joy, the freedom, the confident impulse, the leaping entrance into the realm of limitless possibility, surely all this is Death—or else there is no good God in Heaven; and under the Heaven of Spring who could help being sure of the goodness of God? I send you the first primrose I have seen this year. I hailed it as the star

of how many pleasant hopes! Here is a fine red beetle crawling over my letter. He has put on his holiday coat—obviously quite new—a splendid vest of scarlet slashed with black—all to do honour to Spring. We do what we can, you see. We continue to bring forth something. It is only a bug.—But the will is good.—And our good will must save us at last.

To the Same a few weeks later.

But for yourself and Browning I should certainly not go to England, for my father I could meet abroad, and I confess that England is just now distasteful to me. Still *you* I must see in the course of the summer. Friendship under the chill veil of absence is like a garden covered with snow. The roots, the germs, the bulbs, all are there, but where are the flowers? I should assuredly be loath to acknowledge how many are the affectionate thoughts of you which spring up daily in the silence of my mind, and drop into it again with no chance of ever coming to your notice, if I could bring myself to believe that anything in the way of love is ever really wasted. 'Tis with these, I suppose, as with the dead leaves that are just now so thick upon my favourite walks here. Nature has expended upon each as they are born, so much loving care, that one wonders at first why she witnesses with such indifference their speedy extinction; but the fact is they make a soft, rich carpeting for the forest which protects and nourishes the roots of the great trees, and also keeps warm, till the angel of Spring sounds the Resurrection, many little germs and seedlings of beautiful flowers. So I suppose these poor dead thoughts make a tender clothing for the roots of the mind, and in some way or other serve some purposes of life as well as death.

In the summer of 1861, a year memorable for the completion of Cavour's great policy for the unity of

his country, Robert Lytton spent his holiday once more in Italy, visiting Venice for the first time and finding it "the only town in Italy which is not disappointing at first sight." He was specially struck with the colour of the water city.

To Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton. *June* 1861.

Canaletto seems to me to have represented it with a fidelity which I never before appreciated—that soft, yellow, silvery haze which is neither cloudy nor sunny, and which usurps all things in a diaphanous veil of warm but never intense light. Looking for the first time at the vivid and various colouring of those great breadths and masses of rich Byzantine incrustation which seem to give the *tone* to Venice, especially when they are seen in what Ruskin calls "the bright investiture and sweet warmth of sunset," how readily one can understand why the Venetian school has excelled all others in colour, and why in that respect the best effects of Titian, Giorgione, and Tintoret, unlike even the very best of Rubens, appear so perfectly free from all artifice. I suspect that these great masters must have greatly owed their education in colour to those early architects here, who from dearth of local building material of any great solidity, and from the costliness of imported stones, sought their principal effect rather in rich surface, varied colour, and splendid incrustation, than in any linear beauty. If you took away the colour from St. Mark's I think it would be one of the ugliest buildings in the world, in its general effect at least. I should think that capital hints for any strong effects in architecture might be got from the specimens here of Byzantine and surface Gothic. One apparently very simple and certainly very effective means of obtaining strong effects of shadow on a perfectly flat surface struck me at once—I mean those deep circular windows such as you see on the Doge's palace, and which break and vary a long, even, and otherwise monotonous super-

ficies with deep indentations and vivid spots and dimples of deep shade. And I find this same notion repeated with the same effect in the sculpture of some of the capitals in St. Mark, where the undercuttings of the foliation are much flatter and more superficial than in any Gothic capitals I ever saw, but where an effect of depth and richness is at once obtained from an occasional round and deep drill-hole that makes a black spot for the eye to rest on. I think that there is much more effect of light and shade, much more genuine feeling for such effect in the simple flat façade of the ducal palace here than in the whole of Barry's intricate façade of the Parliament Houses in London. I am the laziest sight-seer in the world, I fancy. I have not seen half the sights here, and don't intend to see them. Titian's great picture[1] in the *Belle Arti* rather disappointed me. My chief delight is to glide up and down the Grand Canal, that great gate-vein of Venice, at evening; one really sees in that way the Venice of romance—Byron's Venice, and *The Ghostseer's*.[2] I look with longing and wistful eyes every evening, as I glide past in the gondola, at that great Palladian Palazzo which Perry tells me you were nearly buying. Italy to me has so strange a fascination that I can hardly fancy how any one who can live in it can live out of it. As I glide in the gondola at evenings up the canals, Vienna, the old Chancery life of copying despatches, London, Paris, even modern Italy itself—the Italy of Cavour and Victor Emanuel, that is—and all the real world seems so far out of sight and mind, that I feel like a happy emancipated dead body, escorted in a comfortable and well-padded hearse, from an earthly existence happily survived, and already half-forgotten, over the still waters of death, up into the silence and splendour of the "city of the saints of God" (*vide* "Tannhäuser"—that great poem!).

[1] "The Assumption."
[2] *Der Geisterseher*, a story by Schiller.

From Venice he went to the Italian lakes, where he was "intoxicated with the beauty" of Como and from there back by Milan to Florence, which he reached only a few days before the death of Mrs. Robert Browning; but in time to receive from her once more the kind welcome with which she had always greeted him.

To JOHN FORSTER. *June* 30.

MY DEAREST FORSTER,—I believe that Isa[1] yesterday wrote to you of the heavy loss that has befallen—a loss for our dear friend Browning irreparable, for us *all* a most enduring affliction. Mrs. Browning died yesterday at 4.30 A.M., without pain, as I trust, and though her head had been wandering, from the weakness of four days' struggle with the disease that made her life ever so frail, she seems at the last to have been in full possession of her most lovely intellect, and, dying on her husband's shoulder, her last words were words of love and blessing to him, and some allusion to the extreme beauty and glory of the state to which she was passing so gently! Browning has borne the first anguish of this blow, that leaves him, I fear, a broken life, with a meekness and fortitude divine. He seems resigned and heroic under suffering as only such a brave, and noble, and unselfish soul can be. I am just going to him, but write thus much because I know that yesterday he expressed the wish that I should write and tell you all. I think he will go at once to Paris. I fear his pain will be harder to bear day by day. My heart bleeds for him, so will yours, I know. I have lost for myself a most dear, true friend. A lovelier life never went back to God.

During these years at Vienna Robert Lytton read assiduously. He read literature with a view to writing it. His memory was remarkably tenacious.

[1] Miss Blagden.

Poems read once he could often repeat by heart; his reading ranged widely through all the domains of literature; it enriched and coloured his mind, and gave to every word he spoke, every page he wrote, however spontaneously expressed, the peculiar charm of literary cultivation.

At Florence he had made a careful study of Milton, he now browsed on the Elizabethan dramatists.

To Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton.

Your notice of Beaumont and Fletcher and Tennyson amused me immensely. I don't find many beauties in the former, very few indeed. But contrary to my expectation I find them more readable and much less tiresome than Ben Jonson. . . . Webster has two striking plays—*The Duchess of Malfi* and *Vittoria Corombona* —the latter especially, which has in it a dirge, equal in its way, I think, to some of Shakespeare's lyrics. I am surprised to find in frequent use throughout all these dramatists the word "its," instead of "'t is," as an abbreviation. I have always regarded it as a modern vulgarism, and certainly it is not to be found in either Shakespeare or Milton. I once looked all through Milton to find "its" as the possessive genitive of "it," and could only find a single instance even of this— "The mind is its own place."[1] I observe that both Shakespeare and Milton scrupulously avoid the neuter gender, but most especially in the possessive—always personifying and writing "his"[2] or "her" for "its."[3] But

[1] "The mind is its own place and by itself
Can make a heav'n of hell, a hell of heav'n."
—*Paradise Lost*, i. 254–5.

[2] "His," however, without personification is the proper possessive of "it" as well as of "he."

[3] A literary friend to whom I showed this letter commented upon it: "This remark, evidently suggested by his own direct observation, is absolutely confirmed by experts. See *The Bible Word Book*, Trench's *English Past and Present*, Craik's *English of Shakespeare*, &c. Add that the possessive 'its' is not found in any of the Quartos of a single play of Shakespeare published in his lifetime; a fact of very great significance."

when they do use the neuter pronoun they generally make a periphrasis and write "the beauty of it" for "its beauty." Certainly I think the word "its," whether as possessive or abbreviation, but especially as the latter, very unpleasant in poetry. As an abbreviation it seems to me decidedly ungrammatical as well as unpleasant. . . . I have found the dramatists very suggestive, and am still luxuriating over them. After Marlowe, Webster is the most striking, and I am disappointed with Ben Jonson.

While the old giants were studied, current literature was not neglected. Carlyle's *History of Frederick the Great* came out at this time. He thought it admirable. "I have been reading it with the greatest pleasure. Conscientious, skilful, and most thoughtful, with all the vividness of treatment peculiar to him. Really a great work, and I think his best. He is the poet of History, sees things as only a poet can."

Tennyson's *Idylls of the King* were also published in 1860. "I have seen the *Idylls* and read them," he says. "Greatly disappointed to find the wilful 'Nimüe' turned into the 'Wily Vivien,' but the book is exquisite, and full of noble maturity. The verse very original, though I prefer the more rich and complex construction of his earlier blank verse, perhaps because I am more accustomed to it."

His father asked his opinion of Alfred de Musset.

"I know him well," he answered, "too well: he has done me harm. I read him with enthusiasm in my most imitative age, and was carried away by the charm of his form and his graceful sentiment. I have imitated him clumsily enough but too much. I think one grows out of him fast, though; he does not long satisfy one's mind, for he creates nothing, and leaves no very complete impression. Men like de Musset and Heine are dwarfs beside Goethe and Schiller, I think, and

even Victor Hugo with all his effect, and occasional vile bad taste, seems to me to embrace a greater thing than Musset, though Musset has much more genuine flavour of the born poet. By the way I knew de Musset personally, made his acquaintance through Anthony Deschamps a few months before his death, found him reading—the *Mémoires* of George Sand. He talked much of her with intense bitterness. I had a strange interview with him altogether."

Sir Edward Bulwer first read Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables* in 1862. He found "the style abominable — bombast to an immeasurable degree, yet always, in spite of more than faults, of crimes in literature and art, one has to acknowledge genius—a genius with horns and tail like a fallen angel."

His son replies:—

"I quite agree in all you so admirably say about *Les Misérables*. It seems to have been put forth as a great effort, and on the whole it is a great failure; still to do it justice you should read the whole. With all its faults, and unpleasantnesses, which are numberless, it is the work of a very remarkable man of genius I think, and has many beauties which are quite untranslatable. The Waterloo book is the worst. I don't know if I wrote you my first impression of the book, but that impression remains unchanged, and was to the effect—that it is like a great cathedral organ playing Strauss's waltzes. Such an instrument has no business to play such tunes, and though the tune is a poor one, the instrument is a great one. Browning once said to me of Victor Hugo, 'His fault is that he sometimes mistakes the *pan forte*' (a highly-spiced gingerbread common in Italy) 'for the sacramental bread.'

"I have been going superficially enough through the Goethe and Schiller period of German literature, and think it, I must say, very grandiose, a noble age of

national letters, great especially in its veracity of purpose and absence of cant and false sentiment and false morality. It is full of courage and *naïveté*, and even Lessing has some very large merits about him. I have half persuaded myself, and sadly enough, that the only great language possible in this age, the only language capable of expressing *all* and lifting us out of our villainous vulgarity of life, is music—Beethoven's is the only voice which has penetrated as far as Shakespeare's, perhaps further."

He read something of German philosophy at this period as well as of German literature. Without ever going deep into the study of metaphysics, it was a department of human thought that had always a great fascination for him. His own temperament was religious and profoundly reverential, while his intellect was sceptical in its nature. His attitude towards the problems of life and death, good and evil, was always one of interrogation; and no creed or dogma ever thoroughly convinced or satisfied him.

To his Father. Undated.

I am beginning Kant, but will not trust myself to speak of him. I could say so much! Certainly all other metaphysicians seem to me nothing but painters of perspectives (more or less clever, but all false) upon the great granite wall of the unknown world. As if any amount of perspective painting could get rid of the wall, or give us a glimpse beyond it! But Kant wipes off all this daubing, strikes the wall, and says decisively to all perspective painters, "Thus far, and no further." Some people seem inclined to wring their hands. I cry "Bravo!" and "Well done!" People are forever howling, "Nothing left to worship?" as though that were the worst that could happen! and then, "Man *must* worship

something," as though it mattered not what, a God or a fetish! I say truth remains to worship, and the danger is, not that we shall get rid of her, but that we shall miss her altogether. Therefore I think Kant a great consoler.

To his Father. Vienna, January 16, 1862.

My most dear Father,— . . . I entirely concur in the justice of all that you say so excellently well as to the nature of the soul, and yet more, in the more important question which you touch on of the relation of man's soul to man's God. An impersonal God is no God at all. Personality can only have relation with personality, and a God with whom man has no direct relation is to all practical intents and purposes a God non-existent. Out of such relationship only as is possible with personal Divinity (a God, indeed, "of the living and not of the dead") can spring the divine importance of duty in its highest action, and the divine comfort of prayer in its daily efficacy. I echo from my heart every word that you say on this subject of prayer. I have long ago convinced myself of the importance of it, and of the almost inappreciable power of it in the formation of character, the conduct of human life, and the conservation of *true* happiness. A really prayerful man can never be thoroughly unhappy—never, at least, be abandoned to the deepest depth of misery. And though assuredly no man can assert that he prays as much, as earnestly, or as constantly as he ought to pray, and though I feel my own habit and mode of prayer to be, though often passionate, yet far too desultory, vague, capricious, and inadequate, still I have never relinquished the practice, and never sincerely prayed to God without conscious benefit to myself. I hope and believe I am a Christian, for I heartily recognise in Christ the most valuable manifestation of a divine personality, but I must own that I base my intense conviction of the truth of Christianity, as a

revelation, on conclusions differing *toto caelo* from all the axioms of existing Church theology, and that if my reason allowed me no choice between the acceptance of those dogmas to which theology chains Christianity (such as that fundamental one of the vicarious suffering of Christ, growing out of the previous yet more revolting hypothesis of original sin—and the gratuitous arithmetical puzzle of the Trinitarian Doctrine), or the rejection of the whole, I would choose the latter alternative. But thanks be to God the Bible is less burthensome than the Church. I think that great mischief has been done, and that great error is still accumulating, by the tacit consent of universal cowardice to bind down theology to a mediæval basis. What was once in advance of human thought is now behind it, and ideas of Almighty Providence, and the relationship between man and God which were natural to men whose intellects matured under arbitrary and autocratic social Governments, when the King was supposed to have nothing but Rights, and the subject nothing but Duties, are incompatible with the deepest and most urgent wants of a society whose mind has been formed by contact with constitutional principles. I am convinced that God has imposed upon everything connected with man and his welfare, the Great Law of Growth, involving incessant change, and that not even Christianity itself, which I trust will ever keep pace with the growth of man's spiritual need—much less theology—can with impunity refuse to submit itself thereto.

There are two great sides to Christianity—the mystical and miraculous, or strictly speaking *religious* side; the practical and humanitarian, or ethical side of it. Hitherto it is, I think, the first that has been most prominent, and best realised. Brute force, as embodied in kings and nobles, was more easily controlled by spiritual terrors and mystery, than by moral maxims and philanthropy. And when the Church had succeeded in establishing this control over kings and nobles, as she

herself became in turn a great political power, and as such exposed to the attacks of the popular movement, she was constrained to make common cause with the other political powers against a common political enemy, and in so doing to rely chiefly upon that side of Christianity which demands authoritative interpretation, and seems to favour conservative doctrine rather than popular sentiment. . . .

Now in spite of the ritualists in England and the Ultramontanes abroad, it appears to me that enthusiasm for what I call ecclesiastical Christianity is slowly but surely wearing out. It is a fatal symptom for any institution—especially for any religion—when it comes to be supported as a matter of good taste, as a social protest against the vulgarity and extravagance of its opponents merely.

Partly perhaps from the growing difficulty of reconciling to perfectly impartial minds the supernatural explanation of the phenomena of the universe as expounded by any church with the revelations of natural science, partly from the increasing insecurity of all those political institutions with which every great existing religious organisation is more or less associated, partly from the authoritative sanction perhaps which the ethics of Christianity appear to give to the socialistic tendencies of the time, it does, I confess, appear to me that a great undercurrent of earnest religious feeling is turning from the dogmatic to the ethical side of Christianity. There is nothing on this side of Christianity which offends the intellect, much that stirs the heart, and elevates the spirit, and though it has the advantage of appealing to both with supernatural credentials, yet it is only on *internal* evidence that it challenges conviction, a great facility to belief in an age of negative criticism which is profoundly mistrustful of *external* evidences. But this side of Christianity is essentially humanitarian, philanthropic, &c. &c. Instead of provoking inquiry into the mystery of Christ's divine origin, it invites con-

templation to the beauty of Christ's *character*. It puts the human side of him foremost, as the especial friend of the poor—always preaching universality of brotherly love, always protesting against the pride of class, and even of nationality—all distinctions of birth, all social exclusions, &c. If, therefore, this side of Christianity should force itself upon more general attention than it has hitherto received, I cannot doubt but what, in the long run, its influence must more or less affect the form as well as the spirit of social institutions, just as these have undoubtedly been affected by the previous influence of the other side of Christianity. Especially when many other influences are already at work upon society which tend to push it in the same direction. . . . Two books of very unequal merit which have recently made a sensation seem to me somewhat significant indications of the increasing disposition to turn from the mystical to the ethical side of Christianity . . . significant not from the merit, but the *popularity* of them, which proves how largely the ordinary public was prepared for their reception—Renan's *Vie de Jésus* in France: Professor Seeley's *Ecce Homo* in England. Renan starts with a frank rejection of the miraculous and mystical side of Christianity. Professor Seeley, on the contrary, reveals in every page of his book a profound personal belief in it. But the two books concur in the same endeavour to place the human, ethical, and practical side of Christianity foremost—both represent a settled conviction that this is the fertile side of Christianity, that side of it which may now be most profitably cultivated, and that it behoves the Christian world at this moment to fix its heart upon the *character* rather than to vex its head about the *origin* of Christ.

The work of literary composition was not put aside during these years of varied occupation. His pen was never idle. The more he read, the more he saw, the more he felt and thought, the more

his brain teemed with ideas for "fifty mammoth works." The story of the composition of "Tannhäuser" has been told. But simultaneously with this poem, which he regarded more or less as in the nature of a holiday task, he was writing several of the poems which were eventually incorporated in *Chronicles and Characters*. The poem on "Galileo and Vanini" belongs to this time, and the "Songs from Servia," which were the poetical outcome of his missions to Belgrade. They were founded on a French prose translation of one Dozon, and were published in 1861. The introduction to these poems conveyed an erroneous impression. While distinctly avowing that his English version of the songs was taken, not from the native language, but from another translation; he nevertheless spoke of the character of the Servian people and of their literature in such a way as to convey the impression that he not only had personal knowledge of their country, but also of their language. A sentence to the effect that he had "gathered the songs" on their native soil was seized upon by a *Saturday Reviewer* as implying that he boasted of a first-hand knowledge which he did not possess. This, following rapidly on the top of the accusation of plagiarism over *Lucile*, was damaging and vexing, but Robert Lytton did not resent it.

"The *Saturday Review* I consider quite justifiable, although most injurious. My preface to the Servian poems, very hurriedly written, was ill considered, reckless, and so far charlatanic that, although it recorded my acknowledgment to Dozon's book, and openly referred the reader thereto, it suggested, by a sort of swaggering tone, the idea which I did not really intend to convey, that the poems were the result of personal discovery on the spot, and appeared to assert a knowledge of the language which I don't possess. Any

amount of hard hitting therefore on that blot was fair play, and as the poetic merit of the songs was not denied, I don't think that this alone would have done much harm. But taken with the preceding onslaught it has proved injurious."

His great ambition at this time was to write a drama. The life of Barneveldt seemed to offer a suitable subject, and he entered into a long and interesting correspondence with Mr. Motley, the historian of the Dutch Republic, on the subject of the advocate's life, and the general ethics of using history for purposes of art and fiction. Some of the poems, which afterwards appeared in *Chronicles and Characters*, were the outcome of his historical researches at this time, but the play on Barneveldt was never written. Two Italian dramas were next sketched out, but put aside. Then a patriotic English drama which was to epitomise the English character, its virtues, and its defects. "A sort of drama full of generous emotions, which in time of war or national excitement should always find an echo with the public. In fact an English *Wallenstein*."

"Since I have attempted the study of Drama, and given more methodical attention to the laws of this kind of art, I confess that I am more and more attracted and impressed by the nobility and beauty of the pure tragedy, and more and more inclined to regard it as the highest manifestation of poetic thought. The study, too, of this form of art, and the habitual contemplation of art generally as amenable to the laws of tragedy has, I think (at least in my own case I find that it has), a larger, nobler, and more beautiful influence upon the general tone of individual thought, than can be obtained by indulging poetic impulse in forms less severely determined. The ignoble has no existence in tragedy, and

one seems to breathe a stronger breath, and tread with a firmer and more certain step in a world from which the ignoble, the partial, and incomplete are excluded, and in which the tendency of thought must be always upwards towards the summits of human character and action.

"Avalanches cannot be made in the mud. Yet a little sand-grain loosened from the summit of an Alp, may bring down a mountain. So that in tragedy the smallest sand-grain becomes important because it is placed in a lofty *position* from which the action of it cannot be otherwise than noble, and the result of the action sublime. Vulgar natures go on sinning *immense* sins, yet remain to the day of doom safe, little, and mean. But the smallest sin in a great and noble nature has stupendous results. The devil's scavengers care little enough, I fancy, what becomes of the infinite quantity of mud in the world. For the mud must always be mud. But the Prince of Evil will work for centuries with patience to loosen the sand-grain that is to bring down the Alp. He has need of that particle of power, and must have it. What but a mere grain of wrong brings about the catastrophe in the *Iliad*, and the *Nibelungen Lied*."

At last he thought that he had hit upon a subject suitable for dramatic treatment. The influence of two great historical facts appears to underlie the whole fabric of modern society—Christianity and the French Revolution. That is to say, that the most assured sceptic of the nineteenth century was nevertheless the child of Christianity. To doubt and reject Christianity implied a knowledge of its doctrines, a consciousness of its influence. So also those born after the Revolution could not escape its influence. "Whoever would teach us to hate the Revolution cannot help teaching us to know it." Upon these two ideas he thought he could

build a drama in which the chief actors of the first part would be "Aristocracy and Democracy," and in the second part "Constitutionalism and Despotism." No wonder that at first the conception appeared to him to be "too vast for the power I can bring to the development of it." After months of work on it, the ideas which he strove to put into a concrete shape seemed to evaporate altogether. "I began it with a certain gusto of hope," he writes to his father, "and confident expectation that I should make a great thing of it. It melted out of my hands as I went on trying to grasp it, till nothing seemed left but a sort of sickly-coloured solution of poetical elements without form and void, or to use a more vulgar illustration, a mere mass of raisins, suet, and brandy, which have failed to become a plum-pudding."

While he was in this state of discouragement about his own poem, a "mere accident" made him aware of "the existence of a poem which, with a power and felicity" that left him "thoroughly dissatisfied" with his own work, gave expression to an idea singularly similar to the one which that work was intended to embody.

"In an old number of the *Revue des Deux Mondes* I found by chance a prose translation by Count Sigismund Krasinski of *The Infernal Comedy*, a Polish poem published anonymously (I think in 1835). . . . I read and read again the strange poem with ever increasing interest and surprise. Every detail of it remained strongly impressed upon my memory, and so confused and embarrassed all subsequent attempts to complete my own conception that I finally resolved to abandon it altogether. I was, however, unwilling to do this without any record of the feelings which thus induced me to relinquish a work that had long occupied my time and thoughts, and while the effect of the Polish poem was yet fresh in my mind the

following paraphrase of it was written with a rapidity which is perhaps the best guarantee of its fidelity."

This passage occurs in the Preface to *Orval, or the Fool of Time*, a long Polish revolutionary poem which he thus paraphrased and published in 1869.

The abnormal energy shown at this time by Robert Lytton was a cause of anxiety rather than of satisfaction to his father. The following criticism written by Sir Edward to Mr. Forster contains both justice and wisdom :—

From Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton *to* John Forster.
Nice, December 1863.

My dear Forster,— . . . You start a problem about Robert's poetic genius, and I will tell you how, "much meditating," I resolve that problem. You say justly that his genius for poetry is unquestionable with a something that stops its flight short of what seems its natural elevation. I think there are two reasons for this. The first is this : he has the genius of the poet ; he has also studied, much more elaborately than I suspect most poets have done, the secrets of poetic *form*. His vocabulary seems to me astonishing, and he gets at times a finish in the selection of words which seems to me almost like divination, for he will arrive at the highest beauties of our language without being quite sure of its grammar or spelling. *Verbally* I doubt if any one since Milton has more studied the art of composing. What then is the fault ? Partly in nature—that he has immense *imitative* and small *constructive invention*. But this may be easily got over. Clever men can conquer or supply all partial deficiencies in nature. The truer reason is that he does not lead the life of a poet, and does not therefore go through the actual experiences of a *poet's actual life*. No man can lead *at the same time* the poetic life and the

prosaic but what one of the two must suffer for the combination. A great poet may go through all the phases of positive prosaic life and be ultimately the better poet for it. But *during that time* the great poet does not write poetry. Dante did not write poetry while he was a diplomatic envoy nor Petrarch either; Milton suspends poetry while he is writing as Secretary to Oliver Cromwell, or if he does hazard a sonnet or so, they are but poor things for Milton. A man may live in a city and be a man of pleasure and yet lead the poetic life. Witness Byron and, if pleasure be mixing in society, Pope, and perhaps Dryden. It is not necessary to ruminate in the country like a cow. But then while thus living in the city there must be no practical professional pursuit of an antagonistic nature exhausting a great part of the mental strength and leaving poetry as a relaxation rather than the serious, all-absorbing occupation. I felt this truth long ago, and as my life must have been pretty practical, I saw that I could not live wholly as a poet. I think Robert's life must, from accidents of position, be always to a certain degree practical also. There may, however, come long pauses in the practical life during which he may be wholly poet. But now comes a second cause for his not making the progress he ought, about which there can be less dispute and indeed no dispute. He is doing that which the richest mind and the richest soil cannot do long with impunity. He is always taking white crops off his glebe. He never allows poetry to lie fallow. With all his professional and social work before him he still goes on, day after day draining on his best land for the poetic white crop. No man can improve in this way, and if he perseveres he must deteriorate. His facility helps to defertilise him. There in the spring was that poem of *Orsic*,[1] which ought to have been at least one year's incessant care and thought. Now come volumes of Tales from

[1] Afterwards called *Orval*.

Herodotus, and lyrics, and another drama. Remember, all this while he has to go to Servia and write excellent despatches. It is not only two things at a time, but two things wholly antagonistic, and the white crop always carried off, the ground never allowed to lie fallow. If you have any influence with him persuade him not to write a line of poetry for two years, and at the end of that time he will have made a great and sensible leap—at all events it will be a regenerated soil and its products will be new. If he goes on with this fatal facility, I despair of his future. That is, he will not be the great poet he ought to be. It is so even with much less trying labours than poetry. I could not go on writing novels one after the other. I always put two or three years between each. So in oratory. I observe that orators who give way to their "facility" and are always oration-making, end by losing really oratorical genius altogether. They say nothing any one cares to remember. The last is the *necessity* of *debaters*, but poets are not under that necessity. When some one said to Montaigne, "Excuse this work, it is written in haste," he answered drily, "Who *compelled* you to write in haste?" I am sorry that Robert takes to the Drama, for these reasons. First, I disbelieve in a work being a first-rate drama that is not written expressly for the stage. I don't stand without authority in this opinion, Goethe says the same thing, and considers that the dramatist ought to consult his tools, viz. his *actors*, his stage, before arranging his effects. And this is why he calls Schiller practical. Now Robert cannot and ought not to write for *our* stage at present. It would absorb and vulgarise him. Its success has no honour nor renown, and its damnation is infernal. But a drama not for the stage—who cares to read it? His next work ought to be popular, not depend on critics, seize the public. The drama will not, I fear, do that, nor the Tales from Herodotus. These are pretty exercises, but not the spring of a great genius into the arena. If you agree with me, impress this on him. Two

years' complete repose and then a *popular* work, no matter how short. *The Siege of Corinth* is short, so is Gray's *Elegy*, so is Schiller's *Song of the Bell*, so is the *Deserted Village*. But each is a single *coup*, doing what had *not been done before*.—Ever yours, E. B. L.

CHAPTER VII

COPENHAGEN

1863–1864, AET. 31–32

> Be it so! tho' Right trampled be counted for Wrong,
> And that pass for Right which is evil victorious,
> Here, where Virtue is feeble, and Villainy strong,
> 'Tis a Cause, not the *fate* of a Cause, that is glorious.
>
> —*A Beaten Army. Suggested by the Siege of Düppel.*
> *Chronicles and Characters.*

In February of 1863 Robert Lytton was promoted from the post of Second Secretary of Embassy at Vienna to that of First Secretary of Legation at Copenhagen. The additional salary did not amount to more than £100, but the step was given him over the heads of two senior men, and was offered in flattering terms, with full recognition of the ability and success which had distinguished the Servian Missions.

Mr. (afterwards Sir) Augustus Paget was at the time Minister at the Danish Court. Lord John Russell wrote to him, "I send you Mr. Lytton, who is full of ability and promise." When the new Secretary arrived, his chief was about to start for England with the Princess Alexandra and the greater part of the Danish Court, to attend the ceremony of her marriage with the Prince of Wales. Mr. Lytton just saw them before their departure. "The Princess was looking very pretty, she shook hands with me just before she stepped into the carriage. The crowd in the streets was dense, and the whole town fluttering with flags and flowers. Many of the ladies

who were at the station were sobbing, and the whole scene was very touching."[1]

The Legation staff at Copenhagen consisted of Mr. Kirkpatrick—"a good gentlemanlike fellow"—Mr. Plunket, and Mr. Scott, "a very nice young lad. I have him to dine with me at the hotel every day and he hasn't bored me yet. Bridges Taylor and his wife I have also seen. He is a cheery sort of fellow and I like him, but he makes bad puns—like Samuel[2]—and laughs at them immoderately, so that he is more merry than witty. The *Corps Diplomatique* all seem nice, and tolerably harmonious."

No new acquaintances, however, could for a time diminish the sorrowful regret with which he had quitted the circle at the Vienna Embassy. His chief there had treated him as a member of his own family, and under his roof he had realised for the first time the happiness of "home"-life. The friendship of the Ambassadress, Lady Bloomfield, had been tinged with a motherly tenderness to which his warmly appreciative nature had responded with filial gratitude.

To Lady Bloomfield.

"I come back from everything else to the thought of yourself with that deep feeling of quiet comfort with which the heart turns there where it knows that what it seeks it is sure to find, in despite of time and accident and all this dreary drift of change in which our lives must ever wear themselves away till nothing rests of us but dust. God bless you for this great gift of comfort. If friends cannot *do* much for us outwardly, yet there are moments when they can *be* everything. And these moments burn bright and shine clear through the long darkness and chilliness of many years, like the jewels in the eyes of antique statues. But for them we should

[1] To Lady Bloomfield, February 1863. [2] Mr. Forster's servant.

be mere lumps of stone perhaps, but they make a whole life costly."

To the Same. Copenhagen, March 5, 1863.

At last, at last, my good dear friend, for the quiet luxury of what our friend Blazes[1] (the ever-garrulous!) would call a "good talk" with you! At least I hope that this morning may suffer me to get through a page or two of my cerulean papyrus uninterrupted, although for the last two days this poor Legation has been living under an incessant shower of telegrams in consequence of the fresh negotiations which still "like a wounded snake drag their slow length along."

The person who told you that I "eat opium" must have been dreaming himself, I should think. I never touched opium in my life. I once took morphine, by order of a doctor and on a medical prescription, for neuralgia and sleeplessness—I got rid of the neuralgia and abandoned the morphine when I left the Hague—that is six years ago. Since then, I think, about four or five times at the very most, I have under great pain from toothache or rheumatism taken one-third of a grain. I never touch it now. "So much for Buckingham."

I have always shared most fully your belief that we are born for happiness, and adapted and intended to enjoy it under all external circumstances. Consequently I believe that happiness cannot, under any circumstances, be an *impossibility*, except where there is moral disease, which is of course a contradiction of Nature's intentions. Nature assures to all organisms happiness as inducement to the fulfilment of her will. Thus, Nature requires that organised life, which is the servant of her purpose, should use its organs, and keep them capable of carrying on her great business. Consequently all organised life is indued with the want of certain kinds of happiness, which can

[1] Madame Blaze de Bury.

only be attained by the exercise of its functions according to the will of Nature. . . . When I speak of Nature in this way I mean, of course, *God's will* in the physical world. In the moral world the divine intention of happiness is to me equally obvious. It follows from this, I think clearly enough, that the endeavour towards happiness is a duty. . . . And as all duties cannot be by the nature of them other than reciprocal, so I hold in all reverence that whenever man fulfils a duty to God, God recognises and fulfils a duty to man. God claims happiness from man, but in so doing He creates man's claim to be happy. But if we assume happiness to be not only a legitimate, but even the highest legitimate object of life, we must strictly define what we mean by the word, and not confound happiness, so considered, with pleasure, or the gratification of inferior appetites, or anything derived from or dependent on external circumstances. Perhaps one may safely define this happiness as "The conscious co-operation of the creature with the complete purpose of its creation." . . . So also we must exclude from our idea of unhappiness, pain, external injury or privation, and all kinds of self-sacrifice. So that this kind of unhappiness is something quite different from sorrow, since we suppose the good man able to exclude unhappiness from his sensations, but we cannot suppose any man able to exclude *sorrow* from his experience. For instance, we cannot suppose Christ to have been *unhappy*, an unhappy God would be a contradiction of terms. But we know nevertheless that Christ was a man "acquainted with *grief*." We can't escape sorrow because we can't escape *circumstance*. Loss of friends, loss of fortune, loss of health, trusts betrayed or hopes disappointed, pain, poverty, are all so many of the sorrowful conditions of life. And since the only one thing we can take out of this world is the *character* which we form *in* this world, and since character is formed by experience, and experience enriched and deepened by sorrow, I don't think we ought at all to shirk

sorrow or be ashamed of its power upon us. A fine nature must feel sorrow acutely, but a fine nature must triumph over even sorrow eventually.

I said that I hoped I should be able to get through some of these cerulean pages uninterrupted. But the Fates have willed otherwise. Yesterday, when I had written thus far, I was called away to decipher a voluminous telegram (of late we have received about three or four per diem and despatched as many). After dinner I was just about to recommence my epistle, when another telegram "worse than the first" arrived. This morning a third attempt was interrupted by a long visit from the Consul upon business, and now the day is half over. Poor Paget[1] has been exceedingly unwell, and is still looking the ghost of himself. . . . This rather adds to my interruptions and occupations. I don't dare to read over again the first pages of this letter. It seems to me, that I have been writing you a philosophical treatise and not a letter. I did not mean to do this when I began, but the subject carried me off with it, and I was like the parson that "had not time to preach a short sermon." It is very easy to *see* things, and very easy to *talk* them, it is *not* easy to *live* them. I remember to have once heard at Paris a sermon by a Jesuit of great eloquence, on the deaths of the martyrs. The preacher assumed, and I think quite justly, that while the bodies of these men were at the stake or on the rack, the souls of them were already in Paradise—or rather Paradise was in their souls. I believe this. That is just what I mean by "happiness." But how hard to be happy in this way! We can but try always, not minding a hundred daily failures. It is something to feel sure that we are walking along the right road, even though we only limp and stumble over it. That is better than driving smoothly in coach and six to the devil. And here is the great comfort of friendship, and to *me*,

[1] The Minister had now returned to his post.

the especial comfort of the friendship which I feel sure exists between us two. Friends know the best of each other, and *believe* in the best of each other. I can fancy anybody, everybody, saying to you of me, "But you enormously exaggerate the worth of this friend of yours, who by no means deserves your good opinion of him." Which is probably even less than the truth. But this does not in the least shake my reliance upon your friendship, or make me fear that the comfort I find in it might any day, on such grounds, be withdrawn. Of course there is a bad side of human nature as well as a good. But we do not choose our friends for the bad in them, but for the good in them. And the pleasant thing in friendship is that it keeps the *good* side of friends continually turned towards each other. We *make* friends in a higher than the ordinary sense of the word. For our friends are to us in some measure what we make them. Men and women do not, cannot, always think good thoughts and feel good feelings, but when they come into communion as friends they make each other's thoughts and feelings good. Don't you think this true? I suppose you will very soon now be in the country; at which I rejoice for your sake. Here the weather is still cold and uncertain.

To LADY BLOOMFIELD. *Droning Gard, near Copenhagen, May* 10, 1863.

. . . I am here in the country at last. . . . Imagine that about the distance of an hour and a half, or two hours' drive from Copenhagen, the high-road branches off abruptly into a long green lane, and that this lane, after running some little way above the border of a small lake, lower down in a sort of valley, plunges at last into the fringes of a large beechwood which you enter by a lodge somewhat like that in an English park, but rather in *decadence*. In a few minutes you are on a rising ground

above another lake, . . . and on this rising ground there fronts you, backed by the beeches which here stand off at a respectful distance, a large, square, tawny-coloured house something like a French *château*—uglyish outside, but spacious, and containing some fine rooms. This is the mansion in which I hope by the end of next week my chief and his household will be established. About a stone's cast lower down, almost on the shore of the lake, are two small cottages; one belongs to the gardener (who is old, wears spectacles and a fur cap, looks wise, and decidedly imitates Rembrandt's "Miser"); the other, since yesterday, belongs to me. . . . Well, if your friendly imagination will now deign to pass under this "modest roof" it will find itself in a room with glass doors and windows opening on to a kitchen garden by a little stone stair, clustered over with lilac and laburnum, not yet out in blossom, so that at present the prospect on this side is confined to pot-herbs—homely, but soothing to the solitary eye, which sees in them a beneficent pledge of the possibility of dinner. Through the windows of the adjoining chamber, however (separated from this only by chintz portières), you may see the lake, windless this evening, and smooth as a mirror (a rare event this, for it is oftenest rough and squally)—about it the deep enormous beechwood, in its youngest, most vivid, new-fledged green, and behind this,—in a sky just rosy enough to make one think of the south, and sigh woefully to feel it so far away—the sun just now setting. Between the glass doors which are open, and an English fireplace wherein the fire is now burning brightly and cheerily—(the sunset light about the walls, prettily papered, and hung with my old Vienna pictures which you know; and on the windows too, where you would hardly recognise my old chintz new washed and smartened up), —sitting at a little table just after dinner, with a cigar in his mouth and huge Newfoundland dog at his feet (munching a biscuit), you are to suppose the writer of this ridiculous letter busily engaged in inditing all the

above-written nonsense. The Newfoundland, who forms the most striking feature in this picture, is the property of your present *attaché* Packenham, which I have taken under my protection, for I found him going about like Israel without a leader, and sometimes I fear also without a dinner. My present possessions, however, extend still further, and include: first, a boat by means of which I have already nearly succeeded in drowning myself and Scott, the *attaché* here (an exceedingly nice young fellow). What a chance for the profession—two vacancies at "one fell swoop"! However, *c'est en tombant que les enfants apprennent à marcher*, and I suppose my naval genius will gradually develop itself under such favourable circumstances. The next item is a hired carriage and pair of horses, an equipage which would do honour to a mother with a dozen marriageable daughters, but which suits me to go up to town in twice a week, as I can read my book in it, and do not aspire to the dangerous dignity of driving myself. Finally, my establishment consists of a small boy with a red face, who undertakes to navigate the boat and complete my maritime education, in return for which services I feed and clothe him, and dub him my Lord High Admiral of the Fleet . . . (the rest of the fleet being at present only *in posse*, like the Prussian Navy); the coachman, who talks German, and drives as such; an Italian servant, tall, stately, with melancholy eyes—a sort of Admirable Crichton—who talks all languages, and cooks my dinner exceedingly well; his wife, a comely Swede, who looks after the house, and waits at dinner; and a housemaid, who is hideous, and does nothing at all. So much for these vulgar personalities. I have done with them. . . .

To LADY BLOOMFIELD. *Copenhagen, June* 2, 1863.

Your warnings, my dear friend, have been all too swiftly realised. Though, thank God, nobody is now

any whit the worse for the catastrophe which I only hasten to inform you of, lest exaggerated reports should reach, and thus needlessly alarm you.

This afternoon I was at home, writing, hard at work on my Greek poem.[1] I had been working all the morning, and a difficult line at last drove me out o' doors for a few moments, to turn it over in the fresh air, when the wife of Paget's coachman met me, half wild, and implored me to run to the lake, as "something had happened." She could not tell me which way to turn, being quite hysterical, but I heard some shouting, and started in that direction as fast as my heels would carry me, with book in hand. I have not in this moment heart or care to go again—even in thought—over the still painful details of a most harrowing and anxious hour, nor describe to you the scene of which I have so recently been a witness. Briefly this, then: it appears that Paget and Kirkpatrick, both good sailors, had taken out my boat on the lake; the boat was under full sail and heavy ballast, the wind high, but not unusually so—the boat sails low always—and it appears that they could not get her up to the wind, before the sheets were so wet on the lee side, that the slip knots could not be got to run out. She filled in a few seconds, sank, and has never since been seen. Paget could not swim; Kirkpatrick could; two oars were all that was left afloat of the boat. Kirkpatrick gave up the second oar to Paget, and struck out for the shore, but the distance was great, and they were out of sight of any house or landing. It appears that the coachman's wife was the first to hear their cries, and this was the merest chance. Before I got to the shore the punt had been put out, and had succeeded in picking up Kirkpatrick, senseless. Paget's poor little wife on the bank screaming, the men shouting, confusion all round, Paget not visible anywhere to *me*. I only gathered that he was still in the water, and

[1] Tales from Herodotus, three of which were afterwards incorporated in *Chronicles and Characters*, published 1868.

plunged in,[1] but could not see him anywhere. He was visible to the others, however, all this while, and the punt had already put back for him. It passed me, and I gathered that the two men in it knew where to steer for. I therefore thought it best to let them go alone, as I should only have overloaded and delayed the boat, not knowing where to steer it, and time, in that moment, was *life*. It was not till a full quarter of an hour later, when the boat was in mid-water, that I saw a small black dot in the distant line of light along the waves, a long way off. I knew it was Paget. I thought I should never see him alive again, the boat seemed to go so slowly. I knew he could not swim, and did not know he had the two oars. It seemed impossible he should keep up so long; every second minute the glare of light on the ripple of water extinguished the black dot. I can't go on. But God be thanked, he was taken up, alive, *quite conscious*, after struggling for *three quarters of an hour* in the water. Both he and Kirkpatrick are marvellously well. Lady Paget showed great presence of mind, and in a moment after they were landed they were both in a hot bath, well brandied and rubbed, till life and heat—almost gone—were rubbed into them. The doctor has been here, and found little or nothing to do. Paget was so quickly restored that he got up and came down to his dinner this evening. Kirkpatrick, more exhausted, remains in bed, but is quite restored, and promises to be as well as ever to-morrow morning. As for Paget, his strength and the second oar saved him. The fatal boat is now in its best place, at the bottom of the lake. . . . Good night, dear my Lady. I am tired and a little upset myself, and must postpone a longer reply to your kind letter.

This year Robert Lytton published a prose semi-supernatural tale, written under the influence of

[1] Lady Paget has told me that he plunged in with his pen between his teeth. He was always a good swimmer.

his new Austrian friend, Villers, and entitled *The Ring of Amasis*. It was written in a hurry, and sold to Chapman & Hall for a sum he was anxious to raise, and could not afford to pay out of his income, to help a friend in trouble. When the story was in proof, it was submitted first to his father and John Forster, and then to Browning and Julian Fane. Their verdict was unanimously unfavourable, and to his father it was a disappointment that at this point in his literary career he should be content to publish anything which did not represent the very best he could do. Alarmed at their criticisms, he tried to stop the publication of the story, but too late.

"*Amasis* is to come out after all," he writes to Lady Bloomfield. "It was impossible to stop publication, as the sheets had already gone out to America. Otherwise I should have suppressed the book. Everybody seems decided that it is a failure, and I suppose I shall soon have a storm of critical objurgation about my ears. What an ass one is to write books, as if there were not enough of them in the world already." The storm did not break, for the little book escaped notice altogether, and fell into oblivion without causing a ripple in critical waters. The idea of the story, however, haunted him through life, and though it was embodied in George Eliot's novel of *Daniel Deronda*, that was of course a much later publication than *The Ring of Amasis*. The problem is that of a man whose crime consists not in action, but in passive inaction, in no deed done but in the refusal to stretch out a hand to save a drowning brother. In the latter years of his life, when he was Ambassador at Paris, he tried to redeem the idea of the book by a more careful setting. He entirely re-wrote the story, and again published it, but the second version failed to interest the public almost as completely as the first.

Denmark at the close of 1863 and during 1864 was the centre of European interest. The war over the Danish duchies of Schleswig-Holstein between the little kingdom of Denmark on the one hand, and the great powers of Austria and Prussia on the other, which led to the annexation of both duchies by North Germany, was but the first act in the great drama which ended in the Peace of Versailles in 1871. Throughout this period the Powers of Europe now appear to have played the part of so many pawns in the mighty but unscrupulous hands of the great Prussian statesman who practically remodelled the map of Europe. England, Austria, and France in turn tried to resist that iron will, all equally in vain—England by diplomatic pressure which was ignored and despised, Austria and France by a resort to military resistance in which they were both worsted. Throughout this period Bismarck kept his aims clearly in view, and ruthlessly used every ally in turn to further his objects.

The policy adopted by England in this controversy has given rise to very opposite opinions. The final verdict of history has yet to be given. There was only one published review of the Schleswig-Holstein question, and the part played by England therein, which in Robert Lytton's judgment gave a true statement of the case. This may now be read in the republished *Quarterly* essays of the late Lord Salisbury.[1]

Soon after his arrival at Copenhagen, when he was in charge of the Legation in the absence of his chief, Mr. Paget, Robert Lytton wrote a long despatch to Lord John Russell (then Minister for Foreign Affairs) pointing out "the growing impatience in Denmark for war, the conviction gaining ground that the European Powers in that event

[1] Essays by the late Marquess of Salisbury, K.G. Edited by his son, Lord Robert Cecil.

would be compelled to come to the assistance of Denmark, the growth of the Scandinavian party, favoured by the menacing attitude of Germany, and the certainty that an attempt would be made by the Government to separate Holstein and incorporate Schleswig, which, if not prevented, would be likely to aggravate the question to an extent that would render war imminent."

Lady Westmoreland writes to her son Julian Fane the following year: "Dundas told me last night that he had been reading the Danish Papers in the Blue-Book, and he was immensely struck with a despatch of Lytton's written about this time last year.[1] He says it is wonderful how subsequent events have shown his judgment to have been perfectly right, and that besides his sagacity Dundas was struck with his writing, which he says is clear, forcible, and without affectation. He said in the course of conversation, 'It was quite astounding, on reading all the other despatches, to see how completely Lytton is an artist in writing and all the others journeymen.'"

To Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton. *Christmas Day*, 1863.

Things in this country are looking very serious. Hall[2] has resigned. The few other men of eminence to whom the king has applied decline to form a Ministry; and after three days of ineffectual effort and powerless uncertainty the country is still without an administration of any kind. Meanwhile the Rigsraad has separated, and the constitution cannot be withdrawn without the consent of the nation, and the talk this morning is of the convocation of an assembly of notables. The German troops have entered Holstein, and a large majority of

[1] 1863.

[2] Danish Minister responsible for the Constitution of November 1863. He resigned rather than consent to the calling together of the Rigsraad for the purpose of rescinding the Constitution.

the Holstein Diet has declared for the Pretender.[1] The king is placed between the peril of two events which may at any moment occur—revolution at Copenhagen, or war upon the Eider.

To the Same. December 27, 1863.[2]

The German Government and the German peoples have the same object in view, viz. the acquisition of a marine frontier and sea outlets. But their motives for prosecuting this object and their views as to the mode of its acquisition are different. The Governments (virtually Prussia) want the sea for obvious purposes of commercial and political aggrandisement. The populations want it because every people struggling to develop and consolidate its liberty has an unerring instinct towards the sea. I doubt indeed if a thoroughly inland people can ever be thoroughly free. Switzerland is not a case in point, on account of her lakes and mountains and strongly marked frontiers. So then, in point of fact, with the German Governments the sea means power. With the German people the sea means liberty. Governments are generally for diplomacy; peoples for war. . . . You think I am a

[1] Duke of Augustenburg.

[2] The subjoined dates may assist in making this and the following letter clear:—

1852. Treaty of London.
1855. Danish Constitution issued.
1858. Constitution of 1855 revoked.
1863. March 30. Royal Proclamation (or Patent).
„ November 15. Death of King Frederick VII. and accession of King Christian IX.
„ November 18. Constitution for Schleswig and Denmark (not Holstein) enacted by Danish Legislation, and signed by King Christian.
„ December 4. Decree of March 30 withdrawn on advice of England.
„ December 7. Federal Execution resolved upon by German Diet notwithstanding withdrawal of decree.
„ December 31. Rendsberg, capital of Holstein, evacuated by Danes.
1864. January 16. Prussia and Austria demand the withdrawal of the November Constitution within forty-eight hours.

partisan of Denmark? In my conscience I believe no man can be more impartial than I. The Danes have always had a very fair cause, and always ruined it by an idiotic policy. When I first heard of the constitution, my first exclamation was, "This is a clear violation of the engagement of 1852, and will lead to disastrous consequences. It is a fatal mistake." I strongly counselled Paget not to wait for instructions in urging upon the Danish Government to withdraw their troops from Holstein and submit *pro tem* to the execution. They were then prepared to fulminate a declaration of war. . . . It is fair to say, however, as regards this constitution: firstly, that even if it were withdrawn, Germany avows that she would not be satisfied; secondly, that in a constitutional country a constitution confirmed by the legislature cannot be withdrawn without the consent of the nation; that the Rigsraad is not now sitting, . . . finally, that Denmark was insidiously encouraged to promulgate this constitution by the language of Bismarck himself to the Danish envoy, and that when it was first published it appeared to foreign Powers so just and reasonable that it was in the first instance incautiously approved by our own Government.

To the Same. Undated, 1864.

Last night I read the article in the *Quarterly* in bed. It is really admirable. Its facts are singularly accurate and well arranged, and its conclusions from them appear to me indisputable. They show a considerable knowledge of the feelings as well as the facts which are at issue on both sides of this question.

But the case against England is really stronger and sadder even than as it is stated by the writer in the *Quarterly*. Or rather it has grown so, since the article was written, I presume. Bearing in mind the fact (which is very intelligently treated in this article) that rightly or

wrongly the whole Danish people believe themselves to have been perfectly in the right throughout the whole of their long struggle with the German pretensions, what is the conclusion to be drawn from the following circumstances?

England originated, undertook, and carried through the Treaty of 1852. Denmark, believing that the integrity of her dominions was thereby secured, and would be thereby respected, was induced to make certain concessions to the two German Powers; and in order to fulfil that engagement the constitution of 1855 was framed. But affairs and views had meanwhile changed in Germany, and this constitution was peremptorily rejected. England then (for conciliation's sake) recommended Denmark to withdraw it. Denmark did so. Subsequently, on the ground that this would render execution impossible by depriving execution of every legal pretext, England recommended Denmark to withdraw the protocol of March. In deference to England, Denmark did so. Nevertheless, England was powerless to prevent the execution, and it took place.

England then recommended Denmark—in order to avoid a war in which England could not then assist the Danes, because the pretext of such a war would have been the constitution about which England had her doubts, and not (avowedly) the dynastic question (about which England had no doubts)—not to resist this execution, but to withdraw her troops from Holstein. Again, in deference to the advice of England, Denmark did so. Thus she abandoned without a blow her frontier duchy to a hostile invasion made under cover of an execution averred by England to be illegal. The Pretender was forthwith proclaimed and protected in the duchy. Not content, the Germans then said, "You must withdraw now within forty-eight hours the constitution of Denmark, or we will invade Schleswig." England again came forward and urged the Danes to comply with this demand also on the ground, distinctly and earnestly

stated, that by so doing "Denmark would put herself entirely in the right and Germany entirely in the wrong;" that she would thereby have exhausted concession and forbearance to its utmost limits, and thus relieve her allies of any lingering doubt or possible scruple they might feel as to the justice of her cause and their ability to support it. Bear in mind, too, that this argument—in itself a very just and reasonable one—was put forward with all force, notwithstanding the fact that the now obnoxious constitution had in the first instance been highly applauded by England, and that she had a few months previously advised the Danes to stand by it. Such pressure was put on Denmark to this end that the then existing Cabinet which had framed the constitution resigned, and the new Cabinet said: "This constitution is the law of the land, passed by the Parliament of the realm and sworn to by the King. The King, therefore, cannot rescind it in forty-eight hours by a *coup d'état*, thus violating the law, breaking his oath, and jeopardising his throne, to please any foreign Power. But all that is humanly possible, or can be fairly demanded, we will do. We will summon the Parliament, and we pledge ourselves to obtain from the representatives of the people the revocation of the constitution in deference to the advice of allies to whom we naturally look for support and do not therefore wish to embarrass, and as a preliminary to negotiations with Germany on the basis chosen by herself, namely of 1851–1852. Further, in proof of its good faith, the Cabinet binds itself to stand or fall by the result." England then said Denmark has now put herself entirely in the right, Germany entirely in the wrong—and the case is clear. Nevertheless the Germans, already committed to a war policy, rightly calculated that the more they bullied Denmark the more England would be afraid of helping her. At that moment the German Cabinets were trembling in their shoes. They were afraid for the Rhine, afraid for Venetia and Hungary, and afraid of the

German revolution. But the first cause of fear was remote, the last urgent. Had England said, "Give Denmark time to revoke her constitution by constitutional means, and we will obtain for you by impartial negotiation everything that you can reasonably ask, but do not deceive yourselves—the first German soldier that crosses the Eider will find an English army there, and your reply will decide the movements of the English fleet"—I say had England said this, not a German soldier would have been moved; there would have been no war. I am as certain of this as a man can be certain of anything. But even had this failed to prevent the war it would at least have enabled us to enter it with a clear conscience, a good cause, and singular advantages.

The nationalities which Germany fears would have risen in her rear. Russia cannot now fight whatever happens. Italy would have hailed us; all our previous policy of sympathy with their aspirations would have received a logical and beneficent realisation. France could not oppose that policy which is her own. To choose alliance with an anti-French Germany in preference to an alliance with England and nationalities, England and an oppressed and gallant people, would be to lose within an hour what has been with her the labour of years. England, however, did nothing. And Schleswig was invaded. The Danes fought as best they could, counting, of course, on our assistance; and what did England then say? Literally these words: "We are exceedingly sorry for all that has happened. Our remonstrances have been laughed to scorn. Germany is behaving infamously. We have no faith in her professions. She is virtually tearing up our Treaty with her on your behalf under our noses, while she is insulting us with an ambiguous promise that perhaps after she has torn it up she will let us put it together again. Our advice to you has been sterile, our expectations abortive, and the Cabinet of St. James's feels keenly all the grave and solemn responsibility which now attaches to it; but,

my good friends, we have no more notion than the man in the moon what we shall now do, except that we shall keep ourselves out of war as long as we possibly can."

What is your opinion as an English gentleman of this policy? I know what mine is. There is a deep stain on the honour of England, and throughout Europe a well-founded conviction that we are a nation of puny and contemptible cowards whom no one need fear and no one can trust. . . . We have no right to put ermine in our arms; we have none of it in our character.

On the 6th of February the Dannewerke line of fortifications was evacuated by the Danes, and they retired in all haste to Düppel, a strongly fortified position opposite to the island of Alsen, where they determined to make a stand.

When this news reached Copenhagen, the popular feeling was violent against the supposed betrayal of Denmark's best line of defence by the abandonment of the Dannewerke, and this indignation was vented in the first instance on the King who, through the Rigsraad, had issued an address of thanks to the army for their gallantry in despite of defeat.

To his Father. February 1864.

The King's astounding Proclamation to the Army, on the surrender of the Dannewerke, was published in Copenhagen at five o'clock in the afternoon. At six o'clock the town was in an uproar. The mob rushed to the Palace (where the Queen was alone with the Royal children), attacked the sentries, besieged the doors, broke the windows, and continued shouting "Death to the King!" for several hours. The crowd did not disperse until after it had been three times charged by the Horse Guards, and the town remained in great agitation during the whole of the night. The following evening the disturbances were again renewed, but the weather being intolerably

raw and cold, the populace was this time easily dispersed by bringing the fire-engines to play upon it.

I was an eye-witness of these scenes, my own house being opposite the Palace, and I passed the whole of the two nights among the crowds, and inspecting the troops which, it is my conviction, could not have been relied upon had the popular excitement become more serious. Mourad's explanation in the Rigsraad, on the following day, has allayed the excitement, and, for the present at least, saved the throne. It is, of course, not for the interest of the King to lose or abdicate his throne (though God knows it is thorny enough), but the throne is entirely dependent on the will of the people.

Sir Edward did not share his son's views at this time as to the duties of England; he thought his burning indignation was caused by Danish partisanship, and he spoke of his long letters on this subject as "wasted talent," and in his replies referred to what he called "the stolidity of Denmark," for whose sake England would in no way be justified in going to war.

To his Father. March 6.

I do not comprehend what you mean by "the stolidity" of Denmark, as applied to a Government which has within the last three months conceded to the demands, both of its allies and its enemies, all that has ever been asked of it, more than could be fairly expected of it, and yielding, one after another, every inch of disputed ground —has, at the risk of internal revolution, abandoned to uncompromising foes and compromising friends, its territories; in short, everything short of the barest remnant of national honour—an old-fashioned property, which, unhappily, Denmark is not yet sufficiently advanced in civilisation and wealth to relinquish with philosophical indifference. . . .

Denmark has certainly shown weakness, but I cannot

see how she has shown stolidity by being the only Power, great or small, in Europe that has either listened to our futile and frivolous advice, or tolerated our vexatious and harmful interference. The stolidity indeed, though not the gallantry, appears to me to have been entirely English. If, however, all the world were unanimous in the opinion, privately expressed by a high authority in England, "that Denmark is now entirely in the right, and Germany entirely in the wrong," I quite agree with you (if this is what you mean) that there is no reason whatever why England on that account alone should go to war with Germany on behalf of Denmark.

What I do think is that England should go to war on behalf of her own honour wherever, and whenever, this has been gravely compromised. For I believe that it is to the material interest of England to keep her honour stainless, and as much above suspicion as that of Cæsar's wife. . . .

You are, I see, under the impression that I am a violent Danish partisan. This is natural, because impartiality is usually supposed to consist of an equal distribution of blame, as though the truth and the right could never be all on one side. But if the despatch referred to in my letter to Layard has, after all, been published in full, you will see by that despatch that I was very far from being a partisan of Denmark at a period when I believed her to be acting foolishly, and that from a very early period I foresaw pretty clearly and calmly the imminent probability of much that has since happened. I am conscious of no partisanship except for the honour and welfare of my country.

The Danes held out bravely at Düppel until the middle of April. Robert Lytton writes on the first of that month to Mr. John Forster:—

There is a young Mr. Herbert here just now—intelligent youth—brother of Lord Carnarvon and, what is better

far, a great admirer of Browning. He has just come back from Düppel, where he was present at the late assault so gallantly repulsed by the Danes (Gallenga,[1] by the way, telegraphs that on that occasion the Prussians attacked and were repulsed three times, and that the fourth time the Prussian soldiers refused to follow their officers, and so retired). Mr. Herbert says he never experienced any emotion so profoundly pathetic as, when standing amongst "those brave, simple, patient men" (so he calls them), he peered out, over the little earthen breastwork, only two or three feet high, into the dark, immense, and indistinguishable night, hearing the shouting of the Prussian advance, and waiting for the dark head of the enemy's column to emerge from behind the hill. He speaks very highly of the Danish soldiery as soldiers, and like all who have seen and mixed with them, appears to have been much struck by their simplicity, courage, gentleness, and calm determination to endure all, and fight till they are annihilated, for their common country. His impressions are more than confirmed by Colonel Layden, a very able Indian Engineer officer, who visited the forts a few weeks ago, previous to the attack.

Line after line of the Danish defences was gradually taken, and on the 18th the last remaining bastions were stormed, and the Prussians became masters of the place.[2]

To his Father. Copenhagen, April 19.

Düppel was taken yesterday. Danish loss at present supposed to be five thousand. Everybody here thinks the burning of the farms in Alsen by the Prussians a greater atrocity than the bombardment of Sonderberg. Thousands of human lives have been lost by our postponement of the Conference to enable the Prussians

[1] The *Times* correspondent.

[2] *Annual Register*, 1864.

to take Düppel. I am enchanted with Lord Grey's[1] last speech, which expresses word for word what I myself think about all this. He is the only public man in England who has yet spoken in this cause.

To J. Forster. *April* 1, 1864.

My dear Forster,—It has been a special and peculiar pleasure to me to find my old true friend (whose presence I need even amongst my own thoughts) with me now in my general views about our Foreign Policy. You will understand this when I tell you that never in my life have I taken, or guessed that I could take, so deeply, painfully, to heart the state of public affairs. Night and day for the last three months (I may say sleeping or waking, for I find myself dreaming about them) I have been haunted by anxious thoughts, which the present state of Europe, and our position in respect to it, are constantly forcing upon me.

[1] Lord Grey on Vote of Censure, Apri 9.

Miss Edith Villiers
(Lady Lytton)
From a painting by G. F. Watts, 1862

CHAPTER VIII

MARRIAGE—ATHENS

1864–1865, AET. 32–33

> Fair soul, that o'er mine own dost shine
> So fair, so far above;
> Dear heart, that hast so close to mine
> The home of thy true love.
>
> —*From a Dedication to his Wife. Fables in Song.*

MR. LYTTON left Copenhagen early in the summer of 1864, and was next appointed as Secretary of Legation under Mr. Erskine at Athens. "It is true that in sending you to Athens," Lord Russell wrote to him, "I intended to promote your advancement. But it is also true that I considered it would be an advantage to the Secretary of State to have the benefit of your acute and penetrating observation on the state of a young country which is attempting, I believe sincerely, to build up a free Government." He did not, however, go to Athens for some months after leaving Copenhagen, and in the interval he met his future wife, fell in love, proposed and was accepted. It was as a married man that he joined his new post.

A home in the best sense Robert Lytton had never yet known, yet by nature he craved for the blessings of domestic life, for the joys of a sure and certain love. At the beginning of this year circumstances combined to make him feel with exceptional acuteness the sadness and restlessness of his single

state. "I feel very '*low* in my mind.' My own life seems so constructed that, turn it how I will, I can find no place for happiness in it, and still one goes on wishing, and hoping, and longing foolishly enough. I live in a continual fever with little rest of mind or body, and weary of the weight of my own self."[1]

Immediately on his return to England, he renewed his acquaintance with Mrs. Edward Villiers, sister to Lady Bloomfield and widow of Lord Clarendon's brother, whom he had first met in Paris ten years ago. Then her daughters had been little more than children, now two were married, and her second daughter Edith lived alone with her mother, partly in London, and partly at a small country place on Lord Clarendon's property, called Grove Mill, which had been their summer home ever since Mrs. Villiers became a widow.

Lady Normanby, the wife of his chief at Florence, was another sister to Mrs. Villiers, and from her as well as from Lady Bloomfield he had constantly heard of Edith Villiers, and her twin sister now married to Mr. Henry Brougham Loch. When he first saw her in Paris she had impressed him "with a peculiar sensation of tenderness and reverence, strangely like the *atmosphere* of love." "Her image had always remained distinctly in my mind, and circumstances were continually investing it with new interest. Her nearest relations were among my most cherished friends, whose judgment I respected, and of whose sympathy I was assured. Whenever I had seen her, my judgment had fully confirmed the universal opinion of all who best knew her."

As soon as he felt that his admiration was ripening into love, he frankly told his father the state of his feelings, not as yet knowing if they were or were not returned. The confession at first was coldly

[1] To Lady Bloomfield, 1864.

received. His father objected that the marriage would be a poor one, that the political views of the Villiers family were antagonistic. The prospect of Whig connections was to him distasteful. His son received from him a letter which was by no means encouraging.

"The next morning, while I was yet in bed (half asleep, and not feeling very well), he walked into my room, and began speaking to me on the subject of his letter in the sense of its contents. I felt uncontrollably irritable, and replied very coldly that all I now requested was permission to spare myself the pain of discussing with him a subject on which I now felt convinced that there could never be any sympathy or confidence between us, and that whatever might be my ultimate decision, I should not trouble him about it. He seemed surprised, and said, 'Don't talk to me in that way.' I said, 'I don't want to talk at all, I am not up to it, I can say nothing that will please you, and will not answer for what I may say, if you compel me to talk.' Whereupon he left the room without another word. After he had left me, I felt that I had done wrong and had shown a want of temper and respect which I regretted, but before I had made up my mind what to do, he sent to say that he wished to see me when I had dressed and breakfasted. On my going to him, to my extreme surprise he received me with the greatest kindness, begged me not to think him harsh or indifferent to my feelings, and said he was sorry if he had appeared so. This quite overcame me, and I said at once, that on the contrary I was about to ask his pardon for my own words this morning, and this led to a perfectly frank and affectionate reconciliation between us. I then found that when he came to me in the morning he had been suffering agonies from an abscess in the jaw, and had since had a tooth extracted without telling me."[1]

[1] To John Forster.

Sir Edward admitted that the marriage in point of birth, family, and character realised all that he could desire, but from a purely worldly point of view it disappointed him. He assured his son, however, that he would not stand in the way of his wishes, and that he was free to make his own choice.

Robert Lytton thereupon went to Grove Mill, his mind relieved, but his sense of his responsibility increased, and with a resolve to keep his feelings in check if possible till he had had further opportunity to consult his father. These resolutions, however, were at once swept aside when his meeting with Miss Villiers revealed to him that her heart no less than his own was touched.

To his Father. *July* 31.

My first meeting on this occasion with Edith Villiers was, in its effect upon myself—and in a manner nothing short of miraculous—instantaneous, decisive, and irrevocable. When I bade her good night on the night of the evening after I last wrote to you, I felt that I had had revealed to me in her the one and only woman out of all the world whom I was born to love with my entire being, and who was born to belong to me. . . . The wisest head may err, and be deceived. The soul cannot. I feel that my future happiness is built upon a rock, and that I have indeed with Heaven's blessing drawn a rare—a peerless—and a priceless prize from the great lottery of Destiny.

To John Forster. *July* 1864.

. . . On returning to Park Lane after I had left the F.O. yesterday afternoon, to fetch my portmanteau, I found that my father had returned to town just ten minutes before I knocked at the door. While I was standing in the hall he came out to meet me and embraced me most affectionately, and gave me his

blessing. He was looking exceedingly unwell. He could hardly have finished the most cursory reading of my letter before we met, and appeared to labour under a very strong and somewhat painful emotion, but was most affectionate though speaking little. My impression is that my letter had taken him by surprise, that he had not prepared himself for so sudden a result, and that the surprise was not an agreeable one to him; that he felt, however, there was no help for it, and had resolved at once to make the best of it, and spare me pain by suppressing all expression of whatever dissatisfaction the news might have caused him.

From JOHN FORSTER *to* MISS VILLIERS. *Palace Gate House, Kensington, August* 3, 1869.

MY DEAR MISS VILLIERS,—I am leaving town by so early a train this morning that while your note is placed in my hand the carriage waits to take me to the station. But I cannot bear to delay even a day's post in writing to you.

The pleasure I wish to express to you cannot be told in words, and therefore the length or shortness of my note matters not. What I have hoped with all my heart might one day fall to Robert's lot—supplying all that so fine a nature wanted to make it worthy of itself by lifting it within the reach of its own ideal—I believe him to have obtained.

I will not attempt to say what I trust that *you* have gained, because I am so selfish as to find my heart filled with happiness on his account almost to the exclusion of the more recent friend to whom I am writing—and so soon to become to me (may I not venture to hope) as near and dear as he has for all his life been.—Ever, my dear Miss Villiers, yours most sincerely,

JOHN FORSTER.

The marriage took place on the 4th of October. Lord Clarendon most cordially lent his country place,

The Grove, for their short honeymoon. On the 10th of October they left England, and after travelling on the Continent reached Athens on the 17th of November.

To his Father. Athens, December 13, 1864.

I have not done justice to the Acropolis, which since I last wrote to you I have visited several times, and always with increasing admiration. It is the most magnificent collection of ruins I ever beheld, in the most magnificent natural situation, and surrounded by the sublimest scenery that can possibly be conceived. Byron's descriptions are all admirable. I have been reading him anew with great freshness of impression, not having looked at his works for many years, and am come to the conclusion that he is, "take him all in all," among the one or two very greatest of the world's poets—*facile princeps* of the moderns; his very blemishes are attributable to his immense size and a part of his greatness. I doubt "we ne'er shall see his like again." But it is singular that, with all his passion for Greece, and Greek antiquity, the sentiment of his verse should be so little Greek. His mind is essentially Gothic—picturesque and grotesque rather than statuesque—but what immense vitality, and easy unconscious rapid power! By the side of his rough-hewn conceptions, and shambling burly bursts of verse, the delicate intricate beauties of Shelley and Keats appear frivolous and effeminate. He remains immortally young —but *un enfant terrible*, a sort of stupendous schoolboy . . . Edith is already very popular. It could hardly be otherwise, so great is her tact, her gentleness of disposition, and consideration for others. Indeed, a sweeter or more even temper, a nature more submissive in little things, more unselfish in great, more devoted, I never experienced. Her companionship is like a permanent bath of sunshine, which both soothes and cheers imperceptibly.

To his Brother-in-law, HENRY BROUGHAM LOCH.
February 10, 1865.

I doubt if the state of this country can ever have been much worse than it is at present. When we handed over the Ionian Islands to Greece, Count Sponneck, the King, and the King's Government, had the rare good luck to find ready to their hands (besides many important material results of English capital and skill, such as excellent roads, &c.), the whole working apparatus of the most efficient administrative machinery which could be constructed out of Ionian materials. They found in all the various offices of the executive and the magistracy, men of tried character and local experience, trained by many years of English manipulation and inspection to be honest, capable, and active public servants so far as their nationality rendered that possible. They found justice fairly administered, order strictly maintained, life and property secure, crime restrained, and labour employed. At present, throughout the Ionian Islands, roads are falling into decay and fast becoming useless for want of the most ordinary repair, the peasants are rising against the proprietors, property is insecure, and as for life, assassinations are of daily occurrence in the open streets. . . . In Corfu the general disorder and profound incapacity of the Executive (all the old English officials, down to the smallest footman, having been summarily dismissed) encourage the peasantry to dispute with the proprietors the tenure of land, and the town suffrage being, under the new electoral law, swamped by the rural, these revolutionists return all the new members, to legalise, if possible, by some act of the legislature the spoliation contemplated by their constituents. . . . So much for the islands: in the kingdom itself, things are as bad, if not worse. Brigandage has revived, and is increasing rapidly. . . . Here are a few facts. A young man was murdered by brigands a few months

ago, and his dead body exposed on the high-road close to Athens, because his friends were too poor to raise the ransom claimed by his captors. The murderer of the youth, having lately held an interview with one of the king's suite on a recent royal shooting excursion, is now living at large, wealthy and unmolested. A noted brigand, a man of many murders, lately captured and tried, was acquitted and released the other day in consequence of a secret instruction to the magistrate in his favour by the Minister of the Interior, for whom this brigand's brother has promised to vote at the next election. I have this from a man who has seen the letter. I know of half-a-dozen other and worse cases, all well substantiated. The sufferers from brigandage are not what may be called the upper classes (for here there are no classes properly so-called), but the peasantry and rural population, the poor in short, whom these rascals rob in order to bribe the rich. . . . I have just finished a long report on the state of this country, which will not go home till next week, but in due course of time, I presume, it will be laid before Parliament.

To his Father. Athens, March 9, 1865.

The spring has come at last—very like a young God, in fire and whirlwind. The south wind blows broadly all day long; violently sometimes, but not coldly, whirling up the dust, but opening also the flowers and scattering the perfume of them in our faces. However, if we have the *pulvis*, we have also the *umbra*—and sun enough to make the *umbra* pleasant. I rise late; but whenever I am up the sun is up before me, and busy—which I am not. The day without a cloud—if not without a care—slips through my fingers, leaving nothing in my hand; and I am growing—oh so idle, so idle! Now I am beginning to feel what it is to dwell, and walk about, a living man, upon the disc of this old burned-out sun of Greece, poking one's nose into the very craters of extinguished historical

volcanoes. I don't care much—certainly not enough—for the Temple of Theseus, the Acropolis, the Parthenon, and those great remains of pure Greece. Great as they are, they seem small to me, as things and places do, which, lived amongst in childhood, one revisits as a man. But there are a few forgotten and unhonoured bones of the Middle Age Colossus, here and there about Athens, which dance through my fancy, when the sun shines upon them, in a way I cannot describe, being no Ezekiel. Amongst others a bit of an old palace of the Dukes of Athens—between the Stadium and the Temple of Jupiter Olympus—few visit it, and nobody cares for it, though it has a fine mosaic pavement of Byzantine device, fast disappearing under the hoofs of the goats and sheep. But the Greeks hate the Middle Age, which they regard as a vexatious interruption of their vainglorious history, and would be gladly rid of all remaining traces of it, and the foreigners here hunt only after the antique. . . . We have had here M. Renan looking up picturesque materials for his forthcoming book upon the *Acts of the Apostles*. The man is like his book—a shallow and self-sufficient *phraseur*. I had a long talk with him the other evening, which left me with the conviction that he is without any conviction of any kind, negative or positive, and has no purpose but to be picturesque and popular in skimming the cream of other men's labour. He professes to be in ecstasies with Athens, and is going in his new book to stone St. Paul with the ruins of the altar of the unknown God. By the way I fancy I have discovered that same unknown God in the Chaldean theology, from which I am convinced the Greeks unconsciously, in their mythology as well as their philosophy, borrowed more than even Mr. Gladstone has guessed. I am up to my ears in the oddest kind of reading on this subject, Arabic doctors and Jewish rabbis, the *Dux Dubitantium* of Moses Ben Mamoun, and a host of others, in whose writings I fancy I can trace the sources of Spinoza. But my chief and most absorbing as well as most ambitious occupation

of late has been the construction of an enormous balloon, 40 feet high and 72 feet in circumference, destined some one of these fine days, if the good fates please, to make its ascent from the Athenian Acropolis amongst the ruins of the Parthenon. The weather is lovely, and propitious to picnics and country expeditions, of which we make as many as the brigands will allow.

During these months at Athens Robert Lytton formed a new friendship. In Comte de Gobineau, the French Minister at Athens, he found a "savant" of surpassing interest. The origin and basis of their intimacy, he writes to his father, was the Caxton family. For this book Comte de Gobineau expressed enthusiastic admiration, declaring that all his strongest moral idiosyncrasies, tendencies, and ways of feeling were embodied in the character of Rowland Caxton; and that he found in the book, ideas and views which it had cost him years to form, and which he had himself expressed in a work on the origin of races.

M. Gobineau has written several books, upon the origin of races, upon mediæval literature, upon oriental poetry, and lately upon the interpretation of the cuneiform inscriptions found at Nineveh. In this last book he attacks Rawlinson, whose interpretations he declares, and so far as I can attempt to judge goes far to prove, to be all wrong; upsets Layard too, and asserts that the supposed Nineveh remains cannot possibly be older than the time of Darius.[1] But the curious thing of all this is that he absolutely declares that it is impossible to have the first requisite for a correct interpretation of these cuneiform inscriptions without having a thorough knowledge of magic! and I believe that the second volume of his work, which I have not yet read, is devoted to a

[1] Comte de Gobineau's view has not been accepted, and the interpretations of Sir Henry Rawlinson and Sir Henry Layard hold the field.

sketch of the scientific principles of oriental magic. M. Gobineau was several years French Minister in Persia, and being previously well acquainted with the East, and speaking Persian and Arabic like a native, it appears he succeeded in getting himself admitted into the living actual and secret life and mind of many oriental races, whose philosophy, theology, and drama, &c., he describes with very interesting anecdotes. Indeed, he is more of a Persian than a European, and asserts that he has a thorough knowledge of magic, and is master of the Kabala.

Robert Lytton's interest in this new friend caused him to review his work on Cuneiform in *Macmillan's Magazine.*

In the spring of 1865 Lord Russell offered Mr. Lytton the post of First Secretary of Legation at Lisbon, for which new post he and his wife started in May of that year.

CHAPTER IX

LISBON

1865–1868, AET. 33–36

> Ay, there are some good things in life, that fall not away with the rest;
> And of all best things on Earth, I hold, that a faithful friend is the best.—*Chronicles and Characters.*

To COMTE DE GOBINEAU. *Mercredi, 24 Mai, à bord l'Enchantress prés de la côte Algérienne.*

JE voulais vous envoyer cette lettre de Malte. Mais mon temps a été si entrecoupé que je n'ai pas pu l'achever avant la sortie de la poste: et je ne voulais pas vous l'envoyer inachevée. C'est donc à bord l'Enchantress que je reprends aujourd'hui notre causerie interrompue, pour vous donner quelques nouvelles de mon *moi* intérieur. Oh mon cher et digne ami, ce que ce *moi* éprouve surtout en ce moment c'est le regret de vous avoir quitté si tôt, de vous avoir connu si tard. Mais au moins je vous ai connu. Et je ne dirai pas même que c'est le souvenir de vous qui me reste pour me consoler de cet éloignement subite, car on ne doit pas appeler ainsi ce qui ne s'engloutit pas dans le passé, étant toujours *présent*, toujours *actif*.

Je n'ai pas peur, non plus que nous nous perderons de vue dans la foule où nous nous sommes rencontrés. Car ne sommes nous pas citoyens (vous maître, et moi écolier, vous chevalier et moi écuyer) d'un pays qui est partout, et dont la foule ne passera jamais les frontières? Tous ceux qui *marchent* doivent, en effet, être sûrs de se retrouver; ce n'est que ses souliers qu'on use, chemin faisant. Je suis fort content de pouvoir écrire ainsi à

mon aise—sans autre témoin que ma femme, la mer, et le ciel. Cela me met en mémoire une assez drôle d'histoire de ce gros et grand bouffon Lablache. A Paris dit on, il habitait dans une maison ou demeurait aussi le petit nain américain, devenu célèbre sous le nom de Général Tom Pouce; Lablache au premier: Tom Pouce au second. Un jour un anglais qui s'extasiait de la petitesse du général (car il ne manque pas de gens qui s'extasient de la *petitesse*) voulait voir le petit bonhomme chez lui, et se trompant de l'étage, frappe à la porte du gros bouffon. Lablache, qui était en robe de chambre, ouvre la porte, et l'anglais d'étonnement tombe presque à renvers.

— Pardons Monsieur je me suis trompé. C'est le général Tom Pouce que je désirais voir.

— Et bien entrez Monsieur. Je suis à vos ordres.

— Vous?

— Mais oui.

— Mais c'est Tom Pouce que je cherche.

— C'est moi Monsieur.

— Comment vous—le petit . . .

— Parbleu Monsieur! Vous devez bien comprendre que quand je suis chez moi je me *mets à mon aise.*

Ce n'est pas à propos de bottes que je vous cite cette histoire. Je pense que quand on se met à son aise (comme je me mets à présent) on doit toujours *grandir.* Dans le cas actuel ce ne sera probablement pas moi qui grandira, mais seulement ma lettre qui deviendra plus longue. C'est égal—je continue.

. . . Voila deux jours que nous sommes sur la mer depuis Malte. La côte d'Afrique nous a tenu compagnie jusqu'à hier soir. Mais notre petit vaisseau va d'une extreme vitesse, et la terre a été peut-être fatiguée, car elle nous a quitté ce matin de bonne heure. Maintenant nous ne voyons plus que le ciel et les eaux. Ma santé va de mieux en mieux. Je me lève à 7 heures—je me couche à 10. Il y a dans la monotonie d'un voyage par mer, avec son retour régulier de certaines occupations

à l'heure fixe quelque chose qui est bon pour la santé tant morale que physique. C'est pourquoi, peut-être les marins me paraissent à la fois plus *hommes,* et plus *enfants,* que nous autres qui, vivant sur le sol ferme, n'avons à faire qu'avec les petites tempêtes, et les horizons bornés. Nous viellissons vite, mais nous ne mûrissons que lentement. Ma chère femme se porte moins bien aujourd'hui. Que Dieu me soit en aide pour la défendre de tous les maux de la vie, qui ne peuvent m'atteindre au cœur qu'à travers elle. C'est une anxieté sans cesse d'avoir placé toute sa fortune (même fusse-t-elle celle des Rothschilds) dans une seule barque. Aujourd'hui pourtant il n'y a dans mon cœur que le sentiment d'une profonde bénédiction et reconnaissance à cet Être invisible, qui semble depuis notre mariage s'interesser si visiblement à notre sort, nous guidant de sa main paternelle. Je suis disposé de voir en tout un bien quelconque. Même l'absence, l'éloignement, aujourd'hui me paraissent avoir ceci de bon. Elle nous nous font *comprendre.* Combien l'humanité n'a-t-elle pas du s'éloigner de Homer à travers les siécles pour pouvoir enfin le comprendre! Et les disciples du Seigneur n'était-ce qu'après l'avoir perdu qu'ils ont commencé de le comprendre? Oui, pour que celui qui a quitté ou perdu de vue un ami chéri ne tombe pas, il est obligé de monter—stationnaire il ne peut plus rester. Car l'absence a déjà placé l'image de l'absent dans une région idéale, et pour le contempler il faut s'élever vers elle. Cela fait du bien. Samedi nous devons arriver à Gibraltar, d'où si l'occasion se présente je vous expédierai cette lettre. Ma femme s'associe affecteusement avec moi pour vous prier de nous aider à ne pas être oublié de votre chère Comtesse. Nous, nous n'oublierons jamais toute sa bonté pour nous. A Madlle. Cristine aussi je me permets de dire bonjour. . . .

Adieu, sans adieu—je vous aime: et j'attends de vos nouvelles, sachant fort bien que vous aussi vous m'aimez plus que je ne mérite.—Votre dévoué,

R. Lytton.

The new Secretary found himself in charge of the Legation at Lisbon immediately upon his arrival. His official chief, Sir Arthur Magenis, was away on leave. Lisbon was "stifling hot, dirty, dear, and comfortless," and therefore, as soon as the royal audiences were over, the Lyttons escaped to the neighbouring country of Cintra.

To JOHN FORSTER. *May* 1865.

Here my impressions changed in a moment as things do in a dream. It is impossible to exaggerate the beauty of this exquisite spot, or the delightful surprise of our sensations on arriving here. Cintra is certainly the loveliest natural garden I have yet seen in any part of the world—not excepting even the prettiest parts of Italy. Every beauty of scenery or climate combined. You have Swiss mountains, Italian villas, with English gardens and cottages, surrounded with all the lustrous and luxuriant vegetation of the southernmost South, hedges of geranium and heliotrope, hedges of cactus and the prickly pear; groves of cork, oak, pine, ilex, beech, chestnut, and lime. Magnolias, tulip trees, syringas, camellias, blooming in abundance in the open air; bowers, lawns, woods, rocks, and open heaths; a widely extended plain, half wild, half cultivated, to be seen at every turn in various, ever varying parti-coloured vignettes, through the myrtles, oranges, and overhanging oaks; and to complete all this, the whole of the western horizon, where the sun goes down in full southern splendour, is bound by the blue expanse of the distant, but not far distant, sea! The place is fifteen miles from Lisbon, which as horses go here is about three hours' journey. . . . We are quartered at the funniest little wayside inn, in a couple of small rooms with white dimity curtains, kept by an old English-woman who has long been established in Portugal, and a well-known and quite prominent character here.

In this paradise of natural beauty the Lyttons spent the greater part of the next three years. In the summer of 1865, however, soon after they had arrived in this fascinating spot, their happiness was marred by a first separation. It was thought prudent that for her first confinement Mrs. Lytton should return home to be under the care of her mother and of English doctors and nurses, and in June she left Portugal for England.

"Our parting has been to me an exceedingly great pang," Robert Lytton writes to John Forster, "and now I cannot understand how I scrambled through life so many years without her. I need and miss her everywhere and in everything."[1]

To his Wife. June 1865.

Never was bark or ship so fervently recommended to the care of Him that stills the waters as that which is bearing you and all my hopes to England through this grey growling weather! God be with you, His power encompass you, His goodness guard!

On the 19th of September the joyful news came that a son was born.

To his Father.

My joy is very great but very solemn. I think it is impossible for any man to view more seriously than I do the awful responsibility of paternity. The duty which the parent owes the child has ever appeared to me infinitely greater than the children owe the parent, even as —to speak it humbly—God's duty to man is surely greater than man's to God. For the child has not voluntarily or knowingly contracted any duty or obligation to the parent, and has never solicited the life with

[1] June 29, 1865.

all its pre-arranged conditions which is thrust upon it. But the parent has knowingly, and either deliberately or rashly called the child out of the awful bosom of an unknown world into this, wherein he can at best but very inadequately assure its future happiness and good.

A few days later, in acknowledging his father's congratulations, he added: "Do you really think my boy promises well? I hope so; the third generation is generally more successful than the second. I hope he will in after life complete my incompleteness."[1]

In the little establishment of the inn at Cintra this event interested not only the master but the master's man. Antonio was an important member of the tiny household, a source of amusement but also of irritation to his master. "I want a man," wrote Robert Lytton, "who can keep my plate and my clothes clean, speak, walk, and behave himself decently like an English gentleman's servant, not like a Californian gold-digger." Antonio proving himself quite incapable of realising these requirements, was told that his "Yankee manners" did not suit his present employer and that he might go. If Mr. Lytton, however, was dissatisfied with his servant, Antonio was thoroughly well satisfied with his master, and was determined to stay as long as he could be endured. He therefore promised to amend, and begged that the sentence of banishment might be reprieved. His master could not resist his "surprised air of remorseful resignation," which made him feel a "cold-blooded brute," though he sadly felt that in a small household a "well-dressed, quiet, experienced man" would have given greater "decorum and dignity" to the establishment. "But when he speaks with the air of an Iphigenia in breeches about being cast adrift and breaking his

[1] To his Father, October 4.

mother's heart if he goes to Brazil or America, I begin to get lachrymose." Antonio therefore stayed and was nicknamed the Philosopher.

To his Wife. Cintra, September 1865.

Only fancy—the Philosopher. He has shown the deepest and most affectionate interest in you, daily inquiring after your health, expressing the greatest anxiety and sympathy with my own when your letters fell short. Every letter or telegram I get from you he seems to think can be only to announce your confinement, about which he inquires with eager interest. I have been greatly touched by all this, which I have been attributing to the noblest capacities for affection and fidelity on the part of the Philosopher till this morning he informed me he has made a bet of £1 with an Italian Commissioner at the hotel Braganza whether our future offspring will be a boy or girl, Antonio backing a boy and the Commissioner a girl. Hence the tender interest in the event!

Antonio won his wager.

Robert Lytton suffered at this time from an affection of the eyes which caused him to fear blindness for the right eye. It became clouded, and all objects seen through it looked not only blurred but diminutive in size. The oculists pronounced it congestion of the retina, caused by a general lowness of tone in the system and nervous debility. He was advised then, as often subsequently, to reduce his smoking, and for a time he restricted himself to a cigarette a day, though this painful discipline was not long endured. "I find in moments of excitement or depression," he says in a letter, "I instinctively and more or less unconsciously put a cigarette into my mouth, as a drunkard would unstop the dram-bottle, and that without this stimulant or sedative I experi-

ence a physical difficulty in scraping together and concentrating my faculties upon what I am about."

The eye trouble eventually passed away, and he retained his sight to the end of his life.

It was here at Cintra, while living in old Mrs. Lawrence's inn during his wife's absence in England, that Mr. Wilfrid Blunt joined him and that their acquaintance of Vienna days ripened into friendship. Mr. Blunt has himself recorded the story of their summer intercourse at Cintra:—

"I will try and recall the exact circumstances of this our second and more eventful meeting. It was in the month of August 1865. I had been sent to Lisbon in a kind of disgrace from Paris, having been banished by the paternal care of Lord Hammond, then omnipotent at the Foreign Office, from that city of delights, where I had lived not wisely but too well, to what I considered a terrible and undeserved exile at Lisbon. I was miserably unhappy about this and about other circumstances of my life, which need not here be explained, and stood, in fact, just at that parting of the ways in youth where a little sympathy, more or less, of a certain kind means a whole world of difference in its choice of a road—on this side to salvation, on that to perdition. Lisbon is the mournfullest, as well as the most beautiful of grass-grown cities, and on landing there in the burning heat of summer, my spirits had sunk to their lowest point of depression. I found the Legation deserted, the minister in England on leave, and no one to receive me at my new post but the Chancery servant. I was the only *attaché*, and my only colleague, Mr. Lytton, was living in Villegiatura, he told me, away in the hills at Cintra. I took a ramshackle hack carriage and set out to find him, and as we toiled up the dusty road in the afternoon sun to where Cintra lies perched beneath the eagle's nest of the Pena, my misery seemed to have reached its full. Weary and dispirited, I fell asleep in the carriage. I

shall never forget the sensation of waking in the cool mist at the top of the pass, or the sweet fresh smell of corkwoods dripping with rain as we stopped at the door of the little country inn (kept by an ancient Welsh landlady, once bumboat-woman to the fleet), in which Lytton had established himself in solitude for the summer. He ran out to meet me as soon as I was announced, and with that prodigality of affectionate kindness which was so great a charm in him, welcomed me in. I had hardly been half an hour with him before I felt that, like the pilgrim to the Delectable Mountains, the burden of my sins was falling from my back, and that I had found a guide and friend to show me a way out of my misfortunes. And so in truth it proved. All that evening, and till late into the night, we sat talking of things divine, poetry, philosophy, and sentiment, and many an evening afterwards, till the hours grew small and the candles burned low in their sockets, and a new world of hope was opened to me by his sympathy, and wisdom, and encouragement. If I have had anything in me since of intellectual ambition, the desire to achieve something in literature, and not wholly to waste my life on idle griefs and pleasures, it is to him I owe it, and I am glad to record my debt to him here.

"We spent three months together almost alone in those Portuguese hills, for his wife was away in England and there was no society, and every day my admiration for him and love grew greater. On diplomatic business I do not remember that we wasted a single word or a single thought, for there were no questions pending, but we spent our mornings writing poetry, and our afternoons wandering on donkey-back through the corkwoods, and our evenings in readings and recitations. He was a wonderful reciter, almost an improvisatore, and would seize upon any story he had heard or read, and show in admirable words and with fragments of half-impromptu verse how it could be turned into a poem. In these moods he was as one inspired, and having

listened to him one went away impressed with the idea that one had heard something greater and more beautiful and more dramatic than any written drama. Thus, too, it sometimes happened that, reading the same poem afterwards in its final form, one was a little disappointed. The extreme brilliancy was gone with his voice, and the effect, though still beautiful, had become paler and less vivid. The truth is, that while his imagination was wonderfully quick and facile, as is the case, I believe, with all poets of a high order, he lacked somewhat of that rigid self-denial and labour in the choice of words and phrases which produces the absolutely best-finished work. He allowed himself, how often, to be led aside, as it were, by butterflies from his path, following a rhyme here and a fancy there to the less perfect rendering of the main idea. In recital these digressions seemed in their place, being lightly passed over, while the main points had all their due prominence. The suddennesses of changes were only a new charm which carried the listener on. In reading, however, one was more critical, and the poems became poems only. It was in this way that I had the good fortune to assist at the birth of a number of those admirable half-dramatic pieces which were published later under the name of *Chronicles and Characters*—"Genseric," "Licinius," "The Botanist's Grave," and "The Apple of Life."

"How wonderful, too, were his readings from Browning and Victor Hugo, his two favourite poets then! I had never read a line of Browning till I knew Lord Lytton, and his interpretation of the subtleties of that master of riddles has remained to me like a flash of lightning seen on a dark night, making the subsequent darkness only the more perplexing. "The Grammarian's Funeral," "The Morgue," "Caliban," and "Paracelsus," were, I think, the pieces he liked best, and of Victor Hugo, "Le Crapaud" and "La Rose de l'Infante." His admiration for Browning was at that time almost unbounded, though he considered Victor Hugo, and justly, the greater poet

of the two. To Tennyson I do not think that he was in those days quite just, for it was the dramatic quality that attracted him most, even in lyric-writing, and the monotonous blank verse of the *Idylls of the King* irritated him, and the emasculated paraphrasing of Malory's grand old prose.

"Our afternoon rides were a special delight, for there are few more lovely hills in the world than those of Cintra, and they are enshrined for me for ever in the verses he published about them many years afterwards, in his volume called *After Paradise*. I consider them his best descriptive lines, for as a rule description was not the strongest point in his verse. He lacked, I used to think, something of the correctness of the artist's eye, and it was always the human interest rather than Nature's which stood prominently in his foregrounds. The physical world lent him similes and illustrations of human passion, rather than the subject itself. In this he resembled Byron much more nearly than our more modern poets, and it is distinctly to the Byronic school that his place belongs. I rejoice to think that these delightful days, which were to me the first I had ever enjoyed with an intellect of the highest order—a kind of intellectual honeymoon—were but the prelude of a true and constant friendship, maintained unbroken between us till he died. Neither absence, nor growing age, nor diverging political opinions, were ever able to change it from the romance it was when it first began." [1]

To the older man this friendship added a charm to this first summer at Cintra, and to his whole life a new affection. "I have made a very great and very pleasant discovery," he writes to his wife soon after the arrival of the new Secretary. "Blunt is a poet, and really and truly so far as I can yet judge I think him a genuine poet. This discovery has given me great pleasure." Robert Lytton never ceased to

[1] *Nineteenth Century*, April 1892.

have the heartiest admiration for the writings of this poet, and on two occasions in after years he reviewed the *Love Sonnets of Proteus* in a spirit of warm appreciation.

The following letters were written after Mr. Blunt had left Cintra:—

To Mr. Wilfrid Blunt. *September* 23, 1865.

· · · Your letter has left me very anxious about my old companion at Cintra, in whose welfare our short but intimate and pleasant intercourse has inspired me with a true and brotherly interest. I cannot but think that you are at this moment in what I should regard in my own case as a very *unsafe* state of mind—a state of mind, that is, in which a man's emotions make up such a labyrinth that his best judgment ceases to be a trustworthy guide. To me it has three or four times happened to be completely off the rails of life. Since I have got safely on to them I have looked back with a sort of shuddering gratitude to the force of circumstances which on those occasions painfully prevented me from following out not merely my inclinations, but what at that time appeared to me to be an imperative *duty*, and what in a certain sense was indeed a duty, but a duty which ought never to have existed—a diseased and devilish duty, incompetent either to justify its claim or reward its fulfilment. I should unaffectedly mourn and lament if I thought that one of those Sloughs of Despond, out of which I have so sorely and hardly escaped myself, were destined to engulf you. For your defeat in life would be—for me—no common defeat. You have great gifts to keep or cast away—gifts in the right use of which I feel honestly interested. I am convinced that there is a considerable amount of legitimate felicity which it is in the power of every man to extract in life, if he does not take the wrong way to get at it, but it is so fatally easy to find a wrong way, there are so many of them, and it is

often so many weary years of waiting or searching before one hits upon the right way. Matured as you certainly are beyond your years, yet at your age to be one's own master is a dangerous privilege and a strange responsibility. I could not presume even to hint advice—if volunteered it would be an impertinence, if invited most probably valueless—all I venture to implore you is to weigh well and deliberately the advice you give yourself. If I express anxiety it is because I feel sympathy. Many times in my own life, when I have doubted what was really my duty. I have settled the question by saying, "The thing most disagreeable to do is the right thing to be done, for in doing it I am at least certain that I am not simply yielding to inclinations which I feel too strongly to be able to criticise justly," and I have never had cause to repent in the long run of such decisions. But I have said much more than I meant to say, and fear you will resent it. I have worked with a heavy heart, feeling somehow, I know not why, as if this letter might be the last cordial interchange of feeling between us. For when you leave Lisbon we are not likely, I suppose, to meet again within any period of time of which either of us can foresee the duration. Be assured at least of my sincere sympathy in your present anxieties, and most anxious wishes for your lasting welfare.—Your affectionate colleague. R. Lytton.

To the Same. Lisbon, 1865.

My dear Blunt,—I wish I might use the privilege of a Paris colleague and say My dear Wilfrid. But I hope that my greeting "by any name" may be as sweet. I take it as exceeding kind of you, dear fellow, to have written to me so often, and assuredly it is by me, and not by you, that apologies for silence should have been made. But I shan't make them, as I know you will not exact them. I have been very far from well for many weeks with intermittent fever, and my failure of sight

has made it difficult for me to write. The sight is certainly better, thank God, than it was, but for the last month it has made no sensible improvement. I don't think it will get worse, and I don't think I shall ever quite recover the full use of the right eye. But if the sight gets no worse I shall be well content.

I cannot enough tell you how delightfully I have been surprised about Magennis.[1] I like him very much. Nothing could exceed his kindness to myself and wife when we were in the Lazaretto. He sent us daily provisions from his kitchen, and daily letters of the kindest greetings. Altogether I have found him a very considerate and pleasant chief. . . . I suppose this will find you at Frankfort. It is very pleasant to me to think that your new post insures you the congenial society of Lady Malet. I know of nothing so helpful, and so pleasantly helpful to a man, as the interest taken in him by a clever woman. Victor Hugo says, "C'est la femme qui fait partir l'homme," which has always seemed to me a questionable *double entendre*, but yet it is quite true in the sense in which I suppose he meant it.

Dear old fellow. I hope you will go on writing, and also reading and thinking for the sake of writing, for I am convinced that if you will strictly "meditate" her you will not find the Muse "thankless." You are full of genius and owe it fair play. What I think you will find most requisite is not to take in new stock but to sort and arrange, and make readily available what your mind already has in it. I shall always take a deep interest in what you are and do. I look back to our Cintra life as a sort of dream. It was a little idyll which can never be renewed indeed, as you say. Your companionship and sympathetic intercourse, my dear fellow, was not only a great comfort but also very helpful to me. . . . If, however, I should be an indifferent correspondent, pray don't think me an indifferent friend, and believe me ever, dear Blunt, yours affectionately, R. Lytton.

[1] His chief, who had now returned to Portugal.

To the Same. Cintra, March 18, 1866.

My dear Wilfrid,—I rejoice that you were glad to get my letter, and can assure you that I was exceedingly glad to get yours. By all means call me by any name which may in your opinion deserve the epithet of Christian. But don't call me Edward, which is my first name —because I don't know myself by that name—nor Robert, neither, because that is the name by which I was addressed as a little boy whenever I was going to be scolded. I should like you to call me Bob, a name which has, in my eyes, the merit of being canine as well as Christian (for I have more faith in the canine than the Christian virtues), because that is the name I wag my tail to, having been so called by all my colleagues at Vienna. I admit that from Wilfrid to Bob there is a great descent. But a name which represents "a great descent" is a name to be proud of. And besides—if brevity be the soul of wit—I need not fear to be "a dry bob." So henceforth let us go "bobbing around." I have put off writing to you, for reasons now to be explained. My dear old fellow, I sadly fear that you have been going through a crisis of sharp suffering. But I rejoice with all my heart to find that you have gone *through* it; being convinced that there are some battles in life which leave one either a dead man or a hero. So let me sing my *Te Deum*. Do you remember what Heine says—

"I never thought to bear this blow,
Yet I bore it. *How* I bore it, seek in mercy not to know"?

Nor do I seek to know. But I hope and think likely that this eruption will throw up, like that at Santorin, not only flame and smoke, but also new islands—if not continents—for future cultivation. With me the "Sturm" and "Drang" period lasted ten years off and on, and it is only within the last six months that I have begun to find out that it created much more than it destroyed. For

when eruptions are over, plenty of rubbish remains on the soil. It has given me exceeding pleasure to know that you are working with a will. If you have any small pieces of finished work, the copying-out of which will not over-tax your patience, pray send me some specimens. Remember that if I can ever be of any sort of use about publication or publishers I am yours to command, being like the fox who lost his tail, and therefore recommended the others to "go and do likewise." I wish I could send you some of my own work, but it is all so bulky. The Reform Bill is sure to eat up the public mind, and I think the poets will be put in a corner (not in the Abbey, though) for some time to come.

I have just been reading Taine's criticisms of Carlyle and John Stuart Mill, well done on the whole, and interesting as showing the impression made on an intelligent Frenchman by two essentially English writers. I think he takes a fair measure of Carlyle, but fancy Carlyle in the mind of a Frenchman, what a bull in what a china shop! and his exposition of Mill's philosophy is clever and tolerably accurate, though his attempt to supplement the assumed deficiencies of that philosophy in four small pages of Gallic grandiloquence amuses me much. The two criticisms are published in a little volume, which—if you have it not already—get. I have translated two cantos of Dante into terza rima, from curiosity, and am now going to attempt some translations of Nonnus—school exercises these—nothing more. Now *sufficit*. I think you've enough of it!—Ever affectionately,

R. LYTTON.

By the way, have you seen Victor Hugo's last poem? If not, here it is—

"Pour chasser le spleen
J'entrais dans un Inn,
Ou j'ai bu du gin—
God save the Queen!"

My father has just published a new book of verse, *Lost Tales of Miletus.* Addio.

To the Same. Cintra, August 18, 1866.

My poor dear Boy,—Your letter, received last night, has grieved me greatly. I can well comprehend the cause of your illness; and almost feel as if you had been going over precisely the same thorny ground through which I stumbled years ago into a fever that nearly introduced me to the next world. Indeed I sometimes think that if I could analyse the peculiar interest with which I always think of you, I might find that some part of it is unconsciously occasioned by the force with which you often remind me of myself. Whatever the cause, there is certainly, I think, a peculiar sympathy between us which makes us more intelligible to each other than, I dare say, we either of us are to most people. However, the great thing now, and indeed the great thing always, is to live; and I am thankful not to have known of your illness till the worst of it was over; for I should otherwise have been horribly frightened about you; and now I am only hopefully anxious for further news of you. All passions, all misfortunes, all physical and mental suffering, if they don't kill him on the spot, are helpful in the long run to a man of genius: and those who plunge into the depths, if they escape the shark and the polypus, ought to reascend by-and-by with the pearl. Getting well must now be your chief occupation, and 'tis not an unpleasant one. Andersen, the Danish poet (the "ugly duckling") has been here, and quite in his element. One day, when he dined with us, I read aloud after dinner to my wife and the Brackenburys[1] one of his little stories: and he was so well pleased with my doing this, that he jumped up and kissed me, as Mrs. Disraeli would say, "all over." He is a perfect faun, half child, half God. I have been reading all Voltaire over again, and find that I never

[1] Mr. George Brackenbury, Consul at Lisbon, and his wife.

before sufficiently appreciated his marvellous merit. His surface is quite astonishing in extent; and I think it cant to call him superficial. He only appears so from his constant good sense and good taste, and the wonderful ease and propriety of his style. I am also reading (dictionary in hand, and therefore slowly) the works of Jacob Böhme —a sort of prose Heine—and find his mind well worth making acquaintance with. I have got out that much-talked-of book, *Ecce Homo*, but find it so feeble in grasp and restricted in aim, that I have not yet been able to get through it. English writers seem to me always careful to avoid the core of their subject, or following up their own thoughts beyond the boundary of what in England is thought to be safe and becoming. They are therefore always inconsequent and incomplete. Writers of this kind seem to think they can possess themselves of a subject as the Israelites possessed themselves of Jericho by walking round it, and blowing their own trumpets.

Let us soon again have news of you, and believe me ever, my dear Wilfrid, your most sincere and affectionate friend, R. Lytton.

On Mrs. Lytton's return to Cintra with her little son, the inn was abandoned for a villa at Cintra, where they lived in almost complete seclusion winter and summer. These were probably the years of most unbroken literary activity which Robert Lytton ever enjoyed. His home was a happy one, his surroundings congenial, and his faith in his own powers greater than ever before or since. For days together he would be absorbed in his books and poems, hardly allowing himself to be distracted at meal-time. His official work was not laborious, but he earned the praises of his chiefs. Lord Stanley noted the industry and ability shown in his despatches, and expressed "entire approval" of his conduct while in charge of H.M.'s Legation.

He contributed at this time frequently to *All*

the Year Round, and would also have written for the *Fortnightly Review*, then a new periodical, had not his father, who objected to the liberal views of this magazine, extracted a promise from him not to do so. In 1867 he reviewed for *Blackwood* his father's poems, *The Lost Tales of Miletus*, and in January 1868 contributed to the *Edinburgh* an article on Education. He prepared a new edition of his early poems, in three volumes, the two first of which were published in 1867. The third volume included *Orval, or the Fool of Time*, and some *Paraphrases* not before published, and did not appear till March 1868. The chief object of this new edition was to eliminate from the collection those early poems which he now condemned on intellectual and moral grounds. But the more he felt out of love with the old poems, the more he was in love with the new. This with him was always the case. "Whilst I am writing," he says in a letter to a friend,[1] "the *alito* of composition, and my absorbing interest in the subject of my work, makes it all appear *couleur de rose* to me. The thing, whilst it is in hand, is my constant companion, 'mine old familiar friend,' and I feel a sort of personal affection for it. But, as soon as it is done and out of my hand, all the charm vanishes, and nearly all the interest. Scales seem to fall off my eyes; I am disposed to exaggerate all its defects; I fall into profound discouragement about it; and the thought of it soon becomes intolerable to me. Then I try to escape as fast as I can from the pursuing ghost of it, into the shelter of some new and quite different undertaking."

Of the general scheme and aim of *Chronicles and Characters* he wrote to John Forster:[2]—

> The purely æsthetic purpose of the book is to unroll an extended and rapidly changing panorama of the chief

[1] To F. W. Farrar. Lisbon, October 26, 1867. [2] 1867.

epochs in the history of the civilised world. The moral purpose is, by such picturesque representation of their action upon mankind, to indicate indirectly the *quality* of the chief *ideas* by which civilisation has been from time to time most influenced. The book therefore may be best described as an attempt at a poetic history of the *education* of man. I am sensible that, considered from this point of view, it is very incomplete, and is, at best, but a rough sketch. But the necessity, on the one hand, of keeping within reasonable limits, and the desire, on the other hand, to paint each scene on the largest scale compatible with the size of my stage, has decided me to confine my selection of subject to those historical periods which most distinctly mark the progress of general thought, those, namely, which most comprehensively embody certain abstract conceptions of the human mind—avoiding as much as possible all temptation to wander into by-paths in search of the picturesque. This being the general purpose of it, the book opens with a very slight and shadowy outline portrait of one of the world's earliest teachers, Greece. . . . The panorama then passes at once to the Christian era. My reason for thus leaping over the whole period of Republican Rome, is that the idea thereby represented is a political, not a religious or philosophical idea; and this book is purposely confined to tracing the growth and course of the religious idea, avoiding political ground, except wherever I am perforce carried on to political ground by the action thereupon of the religious idea. My reasons for thus limiting my point of view are indeed personal rather than æsthetic, but as every idea has political action and a political consequence in man's life, many political considerations are incidentally reached by the course which I have followed, and which carries me quite as far into politics as I can at present venture to go.

The polytheism and philosophy of Rome, however, not being original, cannot properly form any subject for treat-

ment here, and the part played by Rome in the political education of mankind is, I think, sufficiently touched on in a subsequent poem ("Licinius"). I think that any one who seizes the purpose to which this book is confined, will agree with me that I have not omitted any necessary step in its development, by placing Christianity at once after Greece, as the second great educational period . . ."

. . . After the second chant follows the third, which refers to the lower empire. From that opulent period of the historic picturesque, however, I have only selected such subject matter as I required to develop the idea indicated in the previous chant. I have thought it advisable to attempt a general comprehensive picture of the whole religious aspect of the lower empire in a single large poem, rather than treat the subject fragmentarily in a series of smaller poems. This attempt you will find embodied in 'Licinius,' which I am disposed to think one of the best poems in the book.

In another letter he says of this poem :—

"In 'Licinius' I have ventured to indicate a conviction that this, the essentially human element of Christianity, is also the essentially divine and immortal part of it, destined, in my belief, not only to survive all theological formula, but also, in proportion to its activity, to accelerate their extinction . . ."[1]

"The echo of the note struck here is taken up again in the shorter poem of 'Irene,' which is meant to indicate that lamentable alliance between Christian dogma and unchristianised ethics—which pervaded the whole Christianity of the Middle Ages—and is still at work wherever Christianity is referred more to its dogma than its ethics. The Christianity of the lower empire brings the subject of the book naturally to that phase of thought represented by Neo-Platonism in the alliance

[1] To Mr. Farrar.

of the Oriental Theology with the Western Philosophy. I think this period of history is, in an educational point of view, more important than it has commonly been esteemed. I have little doubt in my own mind that the horrible Judaism of modern Christianity in a great number of minds is an unconscious result of the influence of Neo-Platonism which largely affected the Early Church, and lasted as Neo-Platonism longer than we care to remember. At any rate I have given a whole chant to it, which, if it serves no other purpose, has at least furnished me with a form for the expression of a fanciful conception that has long been in my head. . . . This part of the book bridges the way from West to East, and the next chant is devoted to the East. It makes no attempt, however, to give any fit and full representation of Eastern thought or Eastern manners. I regard it as a mere interlude. It is superficial, but short, containing only the poem on Mahomet, the poems from Saadi, and that on Solomon. Next comes the fall of the Greek Empire, of which enough is said in the 'Siege of Constantinople,' which I place here . . ."[1]

"In the 'Siege of Constantinople' I relied for effect upon a rapid succession of vivid pictures: and that is why I have broken it up under special headings; for I greatly doubt whether it be possible to make a short narrative poem interesting by means of that sort of narrative interest which demands space for dramatic action, and the evolution of plot. For this reason I don't regard the 'Siege of Constantinople' as narrative, and have not treated it with any view to the evolution of narrative interest, but simply as a series of pictures . . ."[2]

"With the passage of the Eastern Cæsars into the hands of the Franks, the book passes back to the West, and runs very lightly and sketchily down the early Western Middle Ages, hurrying on to the next great educational epoch, viz. the Reformation. The eighth chant (from the Reformation to the Revolution), is, I

[1] To John Forster. [2] To Mr. Farrar.

think, the most important, as it is certainly the fullest in the book. I have felt that the purely representative character I assign to the poem of "The Dead Pope," would probably be misinterpreted into the expression of a rabid and unreasoning Protestantism, if it were left to stand by itself. It is under the influence of this feeling, and with the strong wish to prevent any such misapprehension, that I have written the poem, by which, as you will see, it is immediately followed—viz. the letter from Thomas Müntzer to Martin Luther. I hope this poem may find favour in your eyes—because it occupies a rather important position in the purpose of the book—indicating as it does what I strongly feel to be the great defect of all ecclesiastical Protestantism, and foreshadowing, more or less, the work left by Protestantism (in taking at the outset a false direction) to be dealt with by the Great Revolution. The poem opens somewhat coldly, and perhaps crabbedly, but I think it warms into passion and colour as it goes on. . . . I need say nothing about the other contents of this chant, many of which are known to you. I have carefully revised them all. My reasons for not entering upon that immense subject, the French Revolution, are stated in a note which you will see at the end of the sheets. I have, however, as you will also see, closed this part of the book with a short poem meant to open out a vista, the background of which is filled up by the image of the Revolution. Chant nine, the last of all, is the weakest of all, and rather a supplement or an appendix than a conclusion . . ."[1]

". . . One other explanation. In most modern poems of which the subject is placed in past time it seems to be now customary, conventional I might say, for the poet to adopt a vocabulary more or less unfamiliar, to dissociate himself and his station in the nineteenth century, and 'make believe' as it were that he is really speaking, out of the past, either as a contemporary to the events and characters he describes, or to some age less remote

[1] To John Forster.

than our own from these events and characters, by which they would have been regarded through the medium of sentiments and associations intrinsically different from those of the age in which he is actually writing, and which after all he is addressing. I say not whether this way of treating such subjects be good or bad; but I have not adopted it in *Chronicles and Characters*, wherein I have merely used the past to furnish texts for sermons to the present, which I have been content to deliver in the phraseology of my own day. I mention this only because the modernness, both as regards language and sentiment, of my treatment of many subjects in this book, is not the result of failure in any attempt to treat them otherwise, but of deliberate preference, right or wrong, of this mode of treatment."[1]

To COMTE DE GOBINEAU. 1867.

In all previous utterances in verse I have tried, I think, too much to conciliate my work with the supposed requirements of other people's tastes, rather than to bring into perfect harmony the exactions and wants of my own mind. I came long ago to the conclusion that whether this way of working was right or wrong it is not the best way to form an individual mind; and feeling that it is necessary to be a *man*, before you are an *artist*, I resolved in writing this book to make it as much as possible a faithful expression of my own mind, without reference to any other consideration, in order that I might myself be able to judge, after I had written it, whether in my own mind there be anything worth expressing. I have written this book mainly for my own development and service as it were, not greatly troubling myself about its possible effect upon others, although tolerably satisfied that if I should succeed in really pleasing myself, I should also in all probability succeed in indirectly pleasing some others, no matter how few.

[1] To Mr. Farrar. October 26, 1867.

The proofs of *Chronicles and Characters* were sent to his father, and the following letter records his opinion of them :[1] —

My dear Robert,—I have received your volume, and read it with great care and admiration of its undoubted poetic richness. The admiration is not unalloyed, and I expect that the main fault I find is that which will be felt perhaps indirectly by many readers, and interfere with a wide and popular success. That fault is indeed in itself a fine one; it is the *excess* of richness. But this leads to a redundance of words, as well as of imagery, and out of that redundance comes want of vigour as a *whole;* too many vigorous lines make a weak whole, and too many images and vocabular effects make the sense of the whole obscure. One minor idea drives out the other, till the major idea is hustled out of sight. This is specially the case with the first poem, "Opis and Arge," which to me is unintelligible and the effect tedious.

In some other poems, in the compound epithets and efforts at poetic expression, the same redundance causes affectation. This is eminently the case with "Candaules and Gyges." Furthermore the same redundance runs you into sacrificing the highest aims of poetry to the lowest rank of *true* poetry, viz. the descriptive. I think Hegel very justly put descriptive poetry at the foot of the ladder. You have pages of description, sometimes of external things, sometimes of internal sentiment, in which passion and force get smothered. This, it is true, is the common sin of many modern poets. It began with Wordsworth and was adopted by Shelley. And that is the main reason why those two are not cosmopolitan, cannot please any country but their own. But a poet not cosmopolitan is not of the highest order. They don't touch the universal heart, or even the universal sense of man. In all those whom time has established as the greatest poets, description is terse and comprest. I

[1] From Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton, Nice, January 25, 1867.

am more than ever convinced of the soundness of the advice I gave you years ago, viz. to study "terseness"—terseness is vigour; next to make whole effects, and in order to do so be more simple in wording, and sacrifice the confusing glare of so many sparkling lines that really conduce to nothing beyond admiration of fancy, and that admiration soon fatigues itself.

The general character of your book is youthfulness, the faults of extreme youth such as Keats'; not in the thought or argument which is mature enough, but in form. It is in this respect the youngest book you have written. It wants the masculine severity of taste we expect in the poet full grown. Having thus freely and rudely stated my impression as to the general pervading fault, and my fear that it may serve to contract your audience, I should add for your comfort, that to some readers the fault may seem the chief beauty, and that no man of ordinary taste and candour can deny that it is the book of a thoroughly genuine poet, who would be a greater one if he would indulge less in the ornamental part of poetry, and study rather the proportions of the Temple than the enamel introduced into the architraves. One poem strikes me as amazingly fine; and far superior to all the rest in conception and handling—"Licinius." I have read no poem for many years that so struck me. I could wish it stood alone. The poems I like least are, first, "Opis." I wish that poem did not stand first; it has no interest to me, and the wording seems to me full of false glitter. Second, the "Seraphim," which is too argumentative and dry to the audience for which poets should write; it is certainly too long, but that most of the poems are. Even "Licinius" would be better for more compression. The "Gyges and Candaules" have some dangerous supersensual lines which I advise you to reconsider. It will not do for you to be "Swinburnian."

I fear my criticism will not be a very pleasing one. But you will only take my comments for what they are worth, and I don't pretend to be a very good judge of

contemporaneous poetry. Of the merit of "Licinius" I have no doubt, and of the *genius* of most others I am equally persuaded. But I think you could do yourself more justice if you would hereafter take my hint and study brevity and compactness, which imply force, symmetry, and *oneness* of *effect*. If, instead of studying verbal bits in the classic poets, you would study their avoidance of *longueur* and oriental floridity, and turn then to the really *great* modern poets, and find something of the same merit there, I imagine you would make a great leap. By really great poets, I mean those that have made their way to *all nations*. See how sparingly they describe. The description strikes and remains on the mind because it is rare. The greater the poet the rarer, rarest of all in Homer, and therefore how we recollect his descriptions. I think if you went through a resolute course of Alfieri he might compress you healthfully. His almost sole merit as a poet is the force that comes from compression.

At the time he received it this letter appeared to Robert Lytton unsympathetic, and in his letters to John Forster he defends himself from some of his father's criticisms, but the letter, as a whole, exactly represents his own later view of this work, and most of it he would have written himself about *Chronicles and Characters* in the last ten years of his life. "Licinius" and "The Botanist's Grave" were the only two poems in the work for which their author retained parental affection.

To his Father. April 1866.

Should you have no objection, I wish to publish this book in my own name. First, because it is the first book with which I have felt satisfied, and by which I am ready to stand, regarding it as a new start forward. Secondly, because there is a real Mr. Meredith, an author

in prose and verse, also a client of Chapman, who is very much annoyed by the pseudonym I have taken, and anxious for me to drop it. Thirdly, because the *nom de plume* is no longer a mask, or at least is now a mask which is clearly seen through and useless for concealment. All those considerations in favour of keeping it, which refer to myself personally or professionally, I have considered and rejected. But my name is not, as I regard it, entirely my own to deal with according to merely personal considerations, it is a heritage and a trust received from you. In reality it is not my name, but your name in which it is my privilege to participate with all your honours on it. It is the name of a great man, and the symbol of a great career, and therefore, if you feel personally disinclined to my abandoning the *nom de plume* under which I have hitherto written, I shall not think of doing so.

His father was touched by this appeal, and gave his cordial consent to the name of "Owen Meredith" being dropped for that of "Robert Lytton." At the same time he warned him that the pseudonym was rather a protection than a drawback, and that he would now run the risk of drawing upon his shoulders attacks not merely suggested by the merits or demerits of his verse, but prompted by hostility to his father's name.

The two volumes of *Chronicles and Characters* were dedicated to *Theodore Gomperz*. This friend of Vienna days Robert Lytton described to his father as "a young man of my own age but of vast information (speaks English perfectly), already a distinguished philologian, erudite scholar, metaphysician, and I know not what. He is modest and rather shy, but cram full of reading and knowledge."

Mr. Gomperz has survived Robert Lytton, and has lately published a work in three volumes on Greek Thinkers. Few of the letters from my father to

Mr. Gomperz have come to my possession, but the following one gives evidence of the closeness of their friendship, and of the exchange of sympathy between them. It was written after hearing that his friend was in great grief at the death of a beloved sister's only child.

To Theodore Gomperz. 1866.

"Whom the gods love die young," says the old proverb. Those souls are doubtless fortunate on whose perfect promise at the full Death sets his indelible *fecit*, thereby placing them at once amongst the Maker's completed works, manifestations of power and beauty finished by their own rare felicity of being beyond all need of the slow, tentative, defective process of life's gradual fulfilment. I can understand that. I can conceive cause to be glad—glad for all men's sake—that any human spirit should be so happily formed as to fulfil at once the purpose of man's passage through life by simply revealing itself, and having thereby proved its right *of birth* to all that others acquire only by right of *conquest*, pass lightly upward and onward without effort and without delay. But the unseen sudden hand that strikes from the cripple the crutch to which he clings, selects for special theft the poor man's one ewe lamb, and snatches the water-cup from the lips that are most parching—this staggers and stuns experience, and almost seems to leave no way through the mystery of things here, but the way of some poor beast of burden that, in obedience of a will he can neither anticipate nor comprehend, is turned about to right or left, by the blows that fall on his back. . . . Perhaps life with all its various experiences is no more, in the inscrutable purpose of Providence, than so much stuff of different kinds for the spirit to work upon, and thereby prove its power, putting itself, as it were, in evidence before the great spirit of all—as fire shows itself, and proves its power, by burning—not by the

thing it burns; and the circumstantial result of such working of the spirit—the stuff on which it works, and the earthly residuum of its working, whether joy or sorrow, ashes or smoke—can be of no permanent consequence to the individual spirit, or innermost nature of man, which has worked upon it, thereby kindling, showing, and setting itself free. If that be the case, or anything like the case, in this great sorrow of your dear sister's, and in your own, dearest friend, this great sorrow and power of sorrowing, there is such great love, and power of loving, that I for one must trust, by all my trust in all things good and noble, that such sorrowing cannot be in vain. But there is a profanation to true sorrow in all speculation as to the possibility of its spiritual profit. Not to your sister, scarcely to yourself, dare I speak of this. With her, and with you, dear friend, all my thoughts and feelings sympathise too closely to explore, apart from your own, any portion of that experience which is yet untraversed by your grief. Rather must I remain with you, where you are now, on the road of life. I honour your grief. How should I hope to comfort it?

In the summer of this year (1866) Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton was made a Peer, and will henceforth be spoken of as Lord Lytton.

To his Father. Cintra, 1866.

. . . Dear father, I cannot but feel with a full and grateful heart at this moment, which is to me so proud and so happy a one, that my cause of pride and joy in these last honours so nobly won by her noble son, is the crowning trophy to that monument, loftier if not more loving than the one just completed at Knebworth,[1] which you have so patiently raised—broad and high, on the rich field of a widely cultured life—to the memory of

[1] Monument in the garden.

the mother whom you have so tenderly loved, so loyally honoured, so nobly requited for the gift of a life which such a love—mingling the holiest memory with the most heroic hope—has repleted higher and higher from year to year, from achievement to achievement, in the strength of its manly adoration, For myself, dear father, though I can never hope to follow, I do trust that I shall never fail to study and revere the example of that grand life to which I owe not mine only, but every best and strongest incentive to make it worthier of the honour which extends to it from yours. I am proud indeed to owe to you, for myself and my dear son, admission to kindred with a high and honourable social order in my native land, but I am far more proud to owe to you the example (God grant it may be a lasting heritage to unborn descendants) of qualities which give to social position a nobility such as no social position can bestow. Whilst others will be congratulating you on the ostensible acquisition of a new personal honour to yourself, your own heart will I know congratulate you, as mine does most fervently, not on the honour to yourself but on the honour won by yourself for *her*—on the acquisition of another and a worthy offering to the memory enshrined within that little monument at Knebworth, to which my own first feelings and most grateful thoughts have led me, to kneel in the spirit, by your side, in loving, reverent, and heartfelt recognition of all that I owe to you both. Strange that this monument to her memory should have been almost completed simultaneously with this last result of the labours which her memory has inspired!

Robert Lytton had by this time survived some of his early literary enthusiasms. He writes to Mr. Forster at this time of Carlyle:—

"There was a time when I would have gladly undertaken the longest journey to see Carlyle, and personally

offer him the homage of an enthusiasm which I have entirely ceased to feel. His vividness of *impression* and vigour of expression impose on a young mind of which the tendency is generally to mistake sensations for thoughts, impressions for proofs, and the indefinite for the infinite. But it has long seemed to me that whatever of reality there is in Carlyle is altogether really wrong. It is an enormous nebula, brilliant enough in its hazy glitter, but containing only the elements of what becomes, when condensed into substance, an infinitesimally small world; a world too, in which, as I said, no true man can live without crippling and distorting his whole moral structure. The world which a woman imagines as the fit abode of manliness—full of violent sensations, and weak thoughts, ruled by a certain soured half-consciousness of weakness hoisted upon the shoulders of any of those kinds of brutality, which weakness is ever mistaking for strength."

À propos of many modern writers, he says in a letter to his father:[1]—

"There are two things I object to in poetry. One is display of moral purpose. That is what I dislike in Schiller more or less, and detest in Longfellow; and the other is the absence of moral power which seems to me the fault of Mr. Swinburne."

Of an old favourite he writes in the same letter:—

"Whilst waiting for Edith the other day to put on her hat and shawl to join me in a constitutional trudge, I took up *The Vicar of Wakefield*, which I had not read since I was a child; and although I remembered every detail of the story, it so charmed and interested me that I could with difficulty lay down the book. I took it up again and finished it without interruption the same

[1] March 1866.

evening, and I was wonderstruck at the beauty of it. It is certainly a masterpiece, and quite as good as the *Iliad* in its own way. Reading it is like looking into a crystal in which there is no concealment of nature's workmanship, and of which the transparency is such that you seem to see how every corner of it is made, though all the while you feel how impossible it would be to imitate any part of it. It is the perfection of *simplex munditiis*."

Robert Lytton, though he could not be labelled as belonging to either of the political parties at home, still at this time inclined to the Liberal rather than to the Conservative side of politics.

To John Forster. *Cintra, March* 1866. (*The Reform Bill.*)

What will be the fate of the Reform Bill?[1] I cannot, I confess, feel any sympathy with the Lowings and Horseman-neighings[2] of terror at a modicum of fair play to the working classes. The danger which (as a distant and I confess imperfectly informed spectator) I apprehend is by no means from that quarter, but rather from a plethora in politics of that essentially selfish breeches-pocket morality which in every country more or less accompanies *exclusive* middle-class legislation. The middle class so-called is now politically strong enough to keep the purely aristocratic element within very close and gradually contracting confines; and if it be also strong

[1] On the 12th of March Mr. Gladstone, Chancellor of the Exchequer in Lord Russell's Government, introduced his Reform Bill. The second reading was carried in April by only five votes. A Redistribution Bill followed in May, and on this the Government were defeated on June 19. They resigned, and Lord Derby became Prime Minister, with Mr. Disraeli as leader of the House of Commons. His Reform Bill was brought in on March 18, 1867, and after many changes was passed in July of that year.

[2] This is a reference to Mr. Lowe and Mr. Horseman, "the superior person," who retired with others into the "Cave of Adullam."

enough to exclude altogether the working class from political representation, it will have everything its own way.

The purely aristocratic element is not without a sort of chivalry of its own kind, but unfortunately it is a chivalry always on the wrong side of every great question—a chivalry which would have plunged England into a disastrous and iniquitous war for the purpose of pulling into life a barbarous slave power[1]—a chivalry which would defend, against justice, humanity, and common sense, women-flogging and man-murdering Governor Eyre, on the ground of standing by an official agent against the field[2]—and maintain the Irish Establishment Church rates, and every kind of vexatious oath, on the plea of standing by the Church *versus* the nation.

The middle class *quâ* middle class are too wealthy and well-to-do to have—as a political body—any chivalry at all. And that political conscience whose organ is the city article, has already made England to be esteemed throughout Europe—somewhat more than justly, though not altogether without cause—as the Pecksniff of nations. The so-called working class has, as a body, shown, I think, whenever it has had an opportunity of collectively manifesting its sentiments, much of that kind of chivalry which I, for one, am proud to call English—great fortitude, patience, and endurance, quick enthusiasm and generous sympathy for a cause not exclusively profitable, and disposition to subordinate personal and material interests to abstract ideas which, *à tort ou à raison*, satisfy its sense of right and justice; a chivalry rarely on the radically wrong side of any question, and which I confess I should be glad to see more represented in the political life of the country. A Parliament of Brights might indeed be dangerous, but I am quite sure

[1] South America.

[2] The trial of the Governor of Jamaica for suppressing rebellion with undue severity had just taken place.

that a Parliament of Lowes would not in the long run be very creditable.

To his Father. October 15, 1866.

It seems to me only a question of time how fast, or how far, England must follow the main current of those social forces which are everywhere drifting civilisation towards democracy. Providence seems to bring about republics by means of despots, democracies by oligarchies, constitutions by anarchies, restorations by revolutions, and every extreme by means of its contrary; and the popular Palmerston seems to me to have done a deal towards unpopularising and imperilling the Conservatism which he has been so bepraised for prolonging. For he was a *Roi Fainéant*, whose long and lazy reign has bequeathed to his successors the embarrassment of dealing with a host of difficulties needlessly postponed, and a growing disgust at what his personal popularity as it fades away lays bare—a position in the general estimation of Europe so low and so little secure that it cannot but be distressing to the inherited pride of every high-minded Englishman in the credit and confidence of his country, and an unintelligent and unsafe obtuseness in the opinion of "Good Society," which so long trusted its conscience and intelligence to his safe keeping, as regards all the great forces that are moving the mind and shaping the course of the world around us—a most costly navy felt to be of such doubtful efficiency that it frightens Englishmen more than it frightens foreigners—and an educational system at home so complicated and so avowedly inefficient that it will not bear comparison with that of any other civilised country—a hideous abyss of pauperism, the difficult management of which is entrusted to a coalition of the densest stupidities—and no lack of similar failures, which Radical orators like Bright delight to credit to the account of Conservative statesmanship. I know of no good thing for England at home or abroad

with which the name of Lord Palmerston can be fairly identified; nothing for which posterity will thank either him or his popularity. But the entire social structure of England, in all its most delicate and vital parts, appears to me to be so thoroughly incompatible with either Continental or American democracy that I cannot fancy its being now suddenly democratised without a revolution, for which the occasion that does not exist cannot be invented even by Bright, and of which few of the Radicals themselves appear to be desirous. The terror which Bright occasioned in so many minds ought, I should say, to assist the present Government in the passage of any passable Reform Bill.

To JOHN FORSTER. *December* 1866.

I hope that I may live to see a thorough elementary system of *compulsory* secular education established in England. But I know that this will *never* precede a considerable extension of the suffrage. The result of such a system must be the dissolution of Church and State. I shall fervently rejoice to see that, but the present ruling class would certainly not rejoice to see it, and therefore it will never be the result of their handiwork.[1]

Robert Lytton was present as a spectator in the House of Commons when Mr. Disraeli introduced his Reform Bill on March 18, 1867.

To his Father. *March* 19, 1867.

No report of the speech can convey any idea of the impression of personal misery which Disraeli made on me when delivering himself of his Bill. I never heard him speak worse. He seemed utterly overwhelmed and

downcast by his position, and looked as hideously unhappy as a sick Sphinx whose riddle has been guessed before it is propounded. He delivered himself of his Bill with as much appearance of humiliation and embarrassment as a housemaid who knows she will lose her place for it, might deliver herself of a baby she has no business to have. The speech was tedious, flat, stale, and unprofitable, hesitating and unhappy, received in all but dead silence, broken only by dissent or derision from his own benches, and he sat down with only a few feeble "Hears" which could hardly be called a cheer. The *Times* report makes the best of his speech, and the least of Gladstone's, which kept the House in continuous animation, and was immensely cheered from both sides. Dizzy pumped up a sort of forced vivacity for his reply, and by loudness of utterance and exaggerated gesticulation extracted some warmth from his own people. But it was all "sham-shivers." When he first spoke he was a windbag with no wind in it, and when he last spoke a windbag with nothing but wind in it. Gladstone was cruel. His speech, which tore the Bill to rags amidst a tumult of applause, was painful from its power and the apparent weakness of the victim. But I doubt if it was quite judicious, for the plain inevitable meaning of it was *No* to the second reading—and as you will see by the report, it was the No of a man, rather than of a party. . . . Cranborne's[1] speech, though uttered with much dignity and apparent sincerity of conviction, was certainly not generous, and certainly *was* suicidal to his reputation as a statesman, for his views are impossible.

In another letter he writes: "I doubt if Lord Cranborne—obviously very clever—will ever be a great man. He wants heart, and seems never to rise above the level of a *Saturday Review*." This

[1] Afterwards Lord Salisbury.

is interesting, read in the light of the enthusiastic admiration which he subsequently felt for his political chief.

To his Father. Hyde Park Gate, March 23, 1867.

I called on Lady Palmerston this afternoon at your old house, and sat with her for nearly two hours. She talks about "The State of Affairs" like a Boadicea after the Roman conquest of Britain, and seems to take it to heart grievously; at one moment she burst into tears and said, "This grand old England I have been brought up to be so proud of, that it should come to *this*." Angry with Gladstone, angry with Lord D., angry with all the world except Lowe, whose last speech she praises enthusiastically. One thing rather amused me, however (though in all other respects my visit was really pathetic). I said, "Well, but after all, if you were the Tories" (a strong figure of speech, I grant) "what would you have done, or at least, what do you say *they* ought to have done?" "They ought," she said, "to have brought in a *very* moderate Bill. On that they would of course have been beaten. They ought then, like honest men, to have gone *out*, letting the Whigs come in. The Whigs would then have been obliged to bring in a more advanced and popular Bill. That Bill would of course have been dangerous and objectionable. But the Tories are a strong party and would have been able to perform efficiently their duty to their country, by modifying (from the Opposition benches) such a Bill in a Conservative sense: and everybody would then have been *grateful* to them." What an illustration of the old Whig gospel, that the Tories were created to be always useful to the Whigs.

The Lyttons took a house in Hyde Park Gate for the summer of 1867, when Mrs. Lytton was expecting her second confinement. "The life of London,"

he writes to Lady Bloomfield, "is like Dr. Watts's description of human life—

> 'Man goeth about, about goeth he,
> From Vani*ty*, to Vanit-*ee*
> To and fro his thoughts do fly
> From Vanit-*ee* to Vani*ty*'—

and I am longing to be out of it." On the 12th of June a daughter was born. The child was christened "Elizabeth" after her great-grandmother, and her mother's twin sister, and "Edith" after her mother.

No sooner was his wife convalescent than Mr. Lytton underwent a small operation, after enduring weeks of suffering. The operation "was followed by erysipelas, fever, abscess, and other discomforts," and he was confined to his room for many weeks. This obliged him to postpone his return to Portugal till September, and deprived him of the extra salary of Chargé d'Affaireship on which he had been counting as a means of defraying the exceptional and very heavy expenses of this year. At this juncture his father, though in difficulties himself, owing to the mismanagement of his steward and the claims of his wife, gave him generous help, and Lady Bloomfield, with her unvarying kindness, added her gift to his.

To Lady Bloomfield. *London, July* 25, 1867.

. . . Ah, dear Grey Moth, what is the use of wings if they cannot escape from that hard chrysalis which, for moth and man alike, life contrives to weave around wings and wishes? Yet assuredly *your* kind thoughts of absent friends have not only wings, but golden ones!

. . . I think sickness or ill health of any kind which is enough to confine one to a sick-room for many weeks, but not enough to absorb all one's faculties during that time in the endurance of physical pain, is a most beneficent and refreshing event. I know of none which better deserves to be called a godsend. It enables one

to extricate not only one's arms and legs but also one's thoughts and feelings (often more easily tired than arms and legs!) from this noisy, eager crowd of earthly activities and needs through which we struggle to our graves. It gives us time to look before and after, to review the past, realise the present, and more clearly contemplate the future. What better place than the sick-bed, when fever has fled from it, and the body is at rest, and the mind unemployed upon mean details of life's hourly struggle for leave to live—what better place than this to sum up life's results so far as life has gone—to sift experience—the chaff from the grain—examine ourselves and our gains and losses of love, hope, faith, and courage? It is so wholesome and, thank God, so comforting if there be no crime gnawing the conscience, to be able now and then, as we journey on through its few hasty years, to look upon life from some point of view which reduces it to its real dimensions and proportions, showing us how little are the things which the world in general calls great, and how mighty, how momentous are the things which are so generally accounted of little worth. As the perspective widens how the objects dwindle in size, which when close before us seem to fill up so much of life's space. What a small thing in one sense, how brief at the longest, how paltry at the mightiest, is this single phase of man's immortal, indestructible existence! and yet in another sense how important every least thought, feeling, or action with which the soul, as she passes through this earthly life, defines her own image in permanent outline on the immense background of eternity! Thoughts like these of late, as I lie here in bed, seemingly idle, and really very busy, have led me very very often to *you*, dear friend. For at such times there comes upon the heart a great yearning towards those whom, at such times more than ever, the heart instinctively calls into commune, as its natural kindred. I wonder whether you have ever felt me near you? You have so often seemed to be near me, and we have had many silent talks together. If you

know nothing about them, that does not prove that they did not take place: any more than the fact that we forget our dreams is a proof that we did not dream them. Here is Edith just come home from dining with Aunt Minnie,[1] whose neighbours we are here, and as it is bedtime, and I have only just begun to sit up, a luxury to be sparingly indulged at first, I must say good night, and I heartily add, God bless you.—Your ever loving and most grateful RT. LYTTON.

During this summer in England Robert Lytton had made the acquaintance of the Rev. F. W. Farrar, who was then a master at Harrow, and who in the year 1867 edited a book of *Essays on a Liberal Education*, in which there appeared articles by J. R. Seeley, Henry Sidgwick, Lord Houghton, Mr. Farrar himself, and others. Robert Lytton was interested in the subject of this book, and in complete sympathy with the point of view of the articles, which all opposed the exclusively classical nature of the education of our universities and public schools. He reviewed the book in a sympathetic sense in the *Edinburgh Review* of 1868. On this and other subjects he kept up a considerable correspondence with Mr. Farrar for several years, and never ceased to regard him as a friend. Mr. Farrar warmly reciprocated this interest and sympathy, and wrote a most thoughtful and appreciative review of *Chronicles and Characters* in *Macmillan's Magazine*, March 1868.

To MR. FARRAR. *London, August* 3, 1867.

Of the English University I am not, of course, entitled to speak except with exceeding diffidence and hesitation, never having enjoyed the great advantage which, whatever the defects of those bodies are, I feel certain to be

[1] Lady Normanby.

derived from their training by those who really desire to profit by it. They have produced some of the most accomplished classical scholars in Europe, and at this moment they are distinguished by the names of many men of the highest eminence and the noblest moral and intellectual powers. But looking, as an outsider, upon the average result of the English academic training, its effect upon the national character, its harmony with what is best in the national life, I confess that the staple intellectual type produced by the universities does not appear to me so admirable as it might be, considering their high pretensions and all their "appliances and means to boot." Certainly if the best-educated man is he who by the best and soundest method has attained to the possession of the largest and soundest conceptions on the largest number of subjects, I doubt if the nation yet owes as much as it ought to owe and might be made to owe to the universities: and I cannot but think it would be of immense benefit to the entire community if "Professionals" could be organised at Oxford and Cambridge on a footing somewhat different from the present professional bodies, which relieved from all purely pedagogic functions, and relegating perhaps to the public schools a somewhat larger share in the general work of instruction, might claim to be regarded chiefly as great permanent reservoirs, not merely of academic culture, but of the whole intellectual life of the nation, great stimulating centres of all the intellectual energies and enthusiasms—exercising a direct social and indirect political influence upon the community, of a larger and loftier kind than they at present appear to exert, and giving an initiative direction to the mental activities of the time, by imparting to the student body those productive intellectual impulses which fertilise the whole field of after life, whatever may be the special object of its subsequent cultivation. The German universities unquestionably do this, and to the efficiency with which they do it must, I think, be attributed the

intense national aspiration and robust vital energy which the most repressive and reactionary Governments have never succeeded in suffocating. But only fancy! a friend of mine, just from Germany, tells me that he was present the other day in the committee-room of the H. of C. when Dr. Pusey was giving his evidence about the universities: and that Dr. Pusey coolly informed the committee, as a matter of fact too notorious to require proof, that, as regards the student body the net result of the German University System is not only "Infidelity," but the grossest and most shocking profligacy and immorality. Now I happen to have matriculated at a German university, and though I did not remain there long, I have a pretty large acquaintance with men who have completed their education at German universities; and I feel confident that any one with the slightest personal experience of student life in Germany will confirm my assertion that there exists nowhere in Europe a more pure—I may say a more virgin-minded—community of young men than the student bodies at those universities. As a matter of fact, it so happens that one of the principal conditions of the German Burschenschaft to which its members pledge themselves by oath is chastity. Such a thing as a prostitute is almost unknown in these small towns, and when prostitution does exist in them it is maintained by the town community, and chiefly, in most cases, by the English residents. You may call these young men coarse-mannered because they drink beer and smoke bad tobacco, and live less luxuriously than Oxford graduates, but you can't call them coarse-minded. What do they habitually and enthusiastically discuss over their beer and pipes? Not dogs, horses, cricket-matches, or even, by way of intellectual repast, the theory of Apostolic succession, but philosophy, science, poetry, history, politics, &c., as subjects in which the whole interest of their lives is, for the time being, spontaneously and joyously engaged. I confess I prefer this to the combined produce of the

intellectual flowerpots of Oxford and the moral hotbeds of London.

On his return to Lisbon, a period of profound depression followed that of strenuous and concentrated labour. His poems published, and "Othello's occupation gone," he strove to fill the vacant hours with hard and steady reading.

Besides Montesquieu and Burke, whom I intend to read again very carefully, I take with me the whole of Auguste Comte and the whole of Aristotle (the positive and negative poles of philosophy), and if I succeed in mastering either the one or the other in the course of a year, you must write and congratulate me. Then I have my microscope, and I shall do a little botanising into the bargain. I have purchased a cheap edition of Publius Syrus and am now reading him for the first time. Some of his sentences are excellent. This amongst others (the wisdom of which I am now —having left behind me all I love best out of my migratory home—in a mood to appreciate): 'Homo vitae commodatus non donatus est' (Man is lent not given to life). Is not this finer and truer than the common way of putting it from our pulpits, that "Life is lent not given to man"?[1]

But books were not all-sufficient. Having launched his poetic child into the world, he could not but watch with sensitive concern for some mark of appreciation, some recognition of the virtue which he felt had gone out of him. He never wrote a line with the object of gaining popularity, but having written out of the fulness of heart and brain, he was not so stoical as to be indifferent whether his message fell on listening ears or not. *Chronicles and Characters* slowly and

[1] To John Forster. 1867.

gradually attracted notice. But for a long while it seemed to have fallen stillborn from the Press, "the only notice taken of it being occasional passing allusions to it as a thing far too contemptible and insignificant for criticism by a few of the minor reviews."

"I should certainly have remained indifferent," he writes in a letter, "to the opinion of incompetent judges or the vulgar abuse in which a good deal of private enmity has since found public expression." But the "unbroken silence maintained by men whose intellect and taste" he respected was, he confesses, "a disappointment which did certainly discourage me very much."

In an evil hour I began to ask myself a host of foolish and fatal questions as to the nature of my own faculties, till the doubt of one thing became like despair of all. What had hitherto been the most cherished purpose of my whole life now appeared to me only as a phantom formed out of the refuse of undetected failures; and, in resolving to abandon for ever the pursuit of it, the motive power of labour left me. I lapsed into a lethargy of despondency, from which it became daily more and more difficult to extricate myself. . . . The German proverb says that money lost is little lost, honour lost much lost, but heart lost is *all* lost. And I had really lost heart in life altogether. I knew the only corrective to a state of mind so unwholesome lay in methodical and serious mental labour—labour in some new direction for the attainment of some new object. But, whilst I retained the wish, I had lost all energy for work of any kind. Daily I took up some new subject of study, and nightly I abandoned it, in sheer disgust at my own inability to be interested by it. Disbelieving in my power to reproduce, I had lost the desire to acquire.[1]

[1] To Comte de Gobineau. 1868.

In this condition of mental and physical depression, he felt "the yearning of a weak and sick mind for the sympathy and support of a strong one." His wife was to him then, as always, a most loving and most deeply loved companion. But the very oneness of married life makes it impossible for man or wife to supply, in moments when a great external stimulus is required, that fulness of intellectual sympathy and help which it is the privilege of friendship alone to bestow. The life at Cintra, however, and even at the Portuguese capital, was to a great extent a life of intellectual isolation. This had been its charm when he was absorbed in the work of composition and happy in it. Now it revealed a blank, adding to his melancholy the sense of great loneliness.

To JOHN FORSTER. · *Cintra, December* 1867.

If my daily and nightly prayers, which are frenzied cries for calm, are heard and answered, this abominable state of mind will pass in time; only I trust it will not pass into a permanent condition of idiotcy to which it seems to be tending. I know no words which can express to you the intolerable sense of hopelessness without resignation which comes over me from hour to hour, and is indeed growing chronic with me, in the futile attempt to be simultaneously master and pupil to myself under the conditions of an existence utterly isolated from all intellectual companionship, encouragement, and guidance. Here, from year's end to year's end, I never meet a human being with whom it is possible to exchange two ideas, or from whom the least intellectual assistance or stimulus can be expected. I feel that I am neither intellectually nor morally strong enough to endure without injury this excessive solitude of unassisted effort; and I envy every schoolboy who is submitted to a mental discipline, which, however narrow

and imperfect, is yet more wholesome than any I have the strength to impose upon myself.

To Mr. Farrar. *Cintra, March* 10, 1868.

You speak of the possibility of my being in Parliament. There was a time when I greatly wished it: but it is too late now. I have no independent means, and could take no independent position, nor shall I like the only one open to me. Besides, a man cannot begin a career or an education after he is, as I am, thirty-six, half-way through life. I must stick to the trade in which my youth has been invested. I shall be a minister before many years—an ambassador sooner or later—and eventually retire on a pension, with a wig, a set of false teeth, and the memory of a wasted manhood. I have little ambition for fame, none for power, but I confess that I have had from my earliest boyhood a hungry and thirsty wishfulness not to be idle in the business of the world's intellectual life, and to effect some good for my fellow-creatures. The only faculty in myself on which I have relied for the realisation of that desire is that of verse, which has seemed to me to be the master chord of my entire being, ever since I can recollect. But now I begin to fear that my whole life has been a misconception, that I have all along been mistaking impulse for power—and feeling for force. Well, it must be as God wills. And I could easily resign myself to His will if I were quite sure that I had rightly interpreted it.

In times of great literary depression it was a relief to him to turn to the duties of his profession, and endeavour to devote his energies to that side of his career. This year, however, professional disappointments succeeded to literary ones. He had been for nearly three years Secretary of Legation at Lisbon, and expected a move. In the autumn of 1867 Lord

Stanley offered him a similar post at Madrid. This was no professional advancement, for Madrid was at this time a Legation and not an Embassy, but the offer was made on the understanding that he should be left in charge of the Legation at Lisbon till the end of the year, in the interval between Sir A. Magennis' departure and Sir Augustus Paget's arrival as the new minister. Moreover, the Secretaryship at Madrid was generally understood to lead on to a Secretaryship of Embassy. He accepted the offer, therefore, in the spirit in which it was made.

To MR. FARRAR. *Cintra*, 1867.

I have been offered the Secretaryship at Madrid, by telegraph, and after due reflection I have accepted it, as the post, which is better paid and more important than my present, is generally regarded as a direct step to a Secretaryship of Embassy, but I am in despair at leaving Cintra, and the prospect of all the discomforts attendant on packing, selling, and buying furniture again. However, I expect that I shall not have to move much before the spring. I am in a very unsettled state just now, in consequence of the necessary preparations for such a move. R. LYTTON.

In April 1868 the move to Madrid took place.

CHAPTER X

MADRID

1868, AET. 36

> The world, perchance after all, knows already enough ; what is wanted
> Is, not to know more, but know how to *imagine* the much that it knows. —*Chronicles and Characters.*

THE British Consul at Lisbon, Mr. George Brackenbury, and his wife were amongst the few friends with whom Robert Lytton had been able to exchange ideas during his residence at the Portuguese Legation. Their companionship had been greatly valued, and the tie of friendship between the two families was never broken.

To MR. G. BRACKENBURY. *Madrid, April* 25, 1868.

DEAREST GEORGE,—We live. . . . and, we suffer! I have much to say to you, but it must wait. I can hardly write a line to-night; my poor Edith is very seedy, and the two chicks have horrible colds and coughs. I am tired to death with seeking for houses and finding—disappointments.

To-day, for the first time, we have found something which seems possible, overlooking the Prado, just opposite the Museum, in the Calle de San Juan, lado de la plateria de Martinez, a new house, I think, at any rate a clean one, not before occupied, with fresh air, a fine view, no noise, and the Retiro Garden close by for the children. Rent, utterly unfurnished, 200 guineas a year, and I am

not yet sure whether it will hold us all. All other houses, furnished or unfurnished, are dens of despair—*lasciate ogni speranza voi che entrate;* and here,[1] for wretched fare and accommodation, we are paying £5 daily, without extras, which, with servants' wages and other unavoidable expenses, makes us to be living at the rate of at least £3000 a year!

We accomplished our journey, without invasion of our carriage, till we got within three hours of Madrid. There, at some station (which I wish I knew the name of, that I might curse it without mistake), the carriage was filled with men, who sat upon the babies, opened all the windows, and ate sausages of garlic and asafœtida, so that, between poison and thorough draught, 'tis a miracle we survived those three most wretched hours. Walsham met us at the station, and he and his wife have been incarnations of kindness to us ever since. I like them both greatly. I also like very much what I have yet seen of Baring the *attaché*, and Hunt, translator, &c., who is the image of Odo Russell. Crampton, who looks like an old Druid thoroughly subdued by the Romans, and full of resentment against gods and men, is very friendly, and exceedingly agreeable in his cynical way, but equally unhelpful, and I think he contemplates as something jocose our purgatorial pangs—they tickle his sense of humour, and afford new illustrations of the general perversity of things, as he sees them. Few or none of our colleagues — and altogether none of the native chiefs (except the Comyns)—have we yet seen.

Madrid itself? Well, I must confess that, in spite of the physical discomfort and savage humour with which I view it, I greatly like all I have yet seen of it. I like a town to be a town, and this seems to be all civic animation and sparkle. Madrid looks to me, like a provincial beauty, lively and vivacious, who has been to Paris and come back *mise à la mode*. She reminds you of Parisian women, but you feel she is not *Parisienne*.

[1] At the hotel.

Narvaez[1] is dead, and crowds go and look at his carcass (which is now lying in state) daily. All day long we are house-hunting and visiting, and every night we entertain numerous visitors—black beetles and bugs—such big ones! Brobdignag bugs and beetles; the Portuguese insects are a puny race compared to the Spanish, and much less energetic. I am really struck by the beauty of the women here. I have scarcely seen an ugly one, and my first wonder at the sight of so many pretty faces and feet is now settling into a peaceful permanent purr of pleasurable acquiescence in the truth of the proverb about Spanish beauty. I feel like Candide when he discovered that the children whom he first saw playing with gold nuggets in the streets of Eldorado were not the king's sons. The Prado, too, is really what Mlle. Barbier described it—a *bouquet de fleurs*. I have not yet seen the gallery. Our whole faculties are at present absorbed in the struggle to lodge ourselves before we are ruined. I hope that Providence, which tempers the wind to the shorn lamb, will also have mercy upon the fleeced stranger.

To JOHN FORSTER. *June* 8, 1868.

When I say that Madrid is very expensive, I really say the worst of it. In all other respects my present impressions of the town are decidedly pleasanter than I expected them to be. I fancy that Madrid must have been greatly improved during the last few years. It certainly is now one of the handsomest of the modern capitals. Fine streets and boulevards plentifully watered, after the French fashion, excellent shops, and fountains in abundance, some of which beat any at Paris. The Prado and Fuente, which together now make the fashionable promenade of Madrid, are a very successful miniature of the Champs Elysées and Rotten Row, and from 6·30 to 8·30 they are now densely crowded with handsome

[1] Prime Minister of Spain.

carriages, horses, lounging dandies, and pretty women. This is the fashionable drive where all the world goes daily to meet his wife and her friends. But there are in the town two very good public gardens; one a sort of half-botanical, half-zoological region stored with kangaroos, antelopes, pomegranates, peonies, and Japanese roses; the other a fine Italian garden, somewhat in the style of Versailles or Schönbrunn, with spacious alleys, terraces, statues, and a tolerably large piece of water for pleasure-boats, in both of which places you meet only children, nursemaids, sweethearts, and some few solitary nondescripts who "love green haunts and loneliness"; whilst just out of the gates of the town there is a fine Royal Park overlooking Madrid, where the air is ever fresh and the shade ever quiet, where with a special permission we often drive our small people in the cool of the day. For the day does get tolerably cool some two hours or so before sunset. In spite of the great heat of the forenoon, the streets here are crowded with people who seem to be busily doing nothing, at all hours; but it is not till about seven o'clock that the out-of-door life of Madrid becomes enjoyable. "Pleasure then wakes, and wakens Love," and all the Madrilenos turn out of the little, dark, den-like dwellings in which invisibly most of them starve and slink all day in order to afford the luxurious carriage and showy toilette in which they then emerge to see and be seen on the Prado. The town as you see it now, and especially as you see it first, is a miniature imitation of Paris, with the modernest of stucco faces under the mural crown. Indeed Madrid has always been a modern town, and its oldest historical associations cannot be stretched back to any period of Spanish history that is interesting. You still see, however, with its renaissance front but little altered, the house where Buckingham lived, and the garden wall over which young Charles climbed to surprise the Infanta walking in the garden. The house of the Princess Eboli, too, is probably much the same as it

was when she looked out of one of its windows to see a man murdered by her orders in the dark street which still shuts in one side of that house with a depth of shadow which no modern improvements have yet disturbed. But the palace and the prisons of the Inquisition—the grave not the cradle of the Holy Office—look meaningless and unmischievous enough, not a touch of "Miching Mallecho" about them. You feel that the ghost of Torquemada never walked there. There is still some little character left in the look of the Piazza Mayor, the oldest bit of the town, where the *auto-da-fé* used to take place, but not those of course of Philip II. By the way there is a very curious picture in the gallery here of the last of these ceremonies: wherein the poor Jews and heretics with their tall paper caps, and painted gowns, are made to look at least damnably ugly. The picture is badly painted, but with a certain horrible gusto and conscientiousness of detail which oblige you to look at it longer than you like. I believe nothing would make the present Queen of Spain so popular as to renew, if she could, this ancient national custom. If she could but catch Rothschild and burn him in the Plaza Mayor, her good Madrilenos would throw up their hats for her, and Mr. Reuter would announce by telegraph: "Rothschild est brulé, mais la dynastie est sauvée." Meanwhile the Madrilenos must be content with their only surviving national sport, the bull-fight. I think it preferable to our national sport, the racecourse. If more cruel, it is certainly less ignoble. It is, I must own, the most *imposing* spectacle I ever witnessed, and Byron's description of it in *Childe Harold*, like most of his descriptions, is too vague and wordy; gives you no just idea of what the thing really is, at least what it really is now. Imagine yourself in a vast wooden amphitheatre—as large at least as the Roman Colosseum, I think in fact it must be much larger—and seated in the midst of sometimes as many as ten or more, never less than six thousand of the most demonstrative and

vivacious people in Europe. The theatre is roofless, or roofed only by the intense blue of the southern sky, from which a vast curtain of shadow falls across one side, and a vast sheet of sunshine across the other side of the circus. The seats and boxes on the sunny side are cheap, and occupied by those who cannot afford seats on the shady side, which are dear, and occupied by the *beau monde*. All classes, sexes, and degrees of the population, from the grandee to the workman in his blouse, are represented by this immense crowd, which is in fact a sort of representative epitome of the whole nation, and intensely national in all its characteristics. No matter what may be your rank or social position elsewhere, however, the moment you enter this crowd you become a simple citizen of its mighty republic, a decidedly democratic republic, which is no respecter of persons. It reigns supreme, and the civil governor (who is compelled by usage to attend in his official box on every occasion of a bull-fight) is but the tame executive of this turbulent legislature. From his decorated balcony he nominally and precariously presides (unless the Queen be there, when she does so) over the whole ceremony. But the real president is the crowd itself. Your first sensation on entering your open box is one of immensity, and strange expectation. There is something formidable in the hugeness of the place you are in, and the vast extent and mighty unintelligible murmur of the dense crowd that takes possession of every part of it, rising and rustling upwards in wedges of human faces from the enormous tawny area beneath you to the great white cloud, or dark-blue dome of the summer sky above. At last the trumpet sounds, the music strikes up, and the entire cortège enters at a slow and stately pace. First the mysterious-looking alguazils, with their short cloaks, and breeches of black velvet, their thin dark faces, and white lace ruffs and collars, each with his wand of office, all dignity and importance, and irresistibly reminding you of stories of old Spain, and

half-forgotten pictures of Philip II. Then the picadors, on miserable broken-kneed Rosinantes (poor brutes so soon to perish wretchedly!) padded from top to toe in clumsy buff armour, with slouching hats, and wooden lances—a sort of caricature of Don Quixote—himself a caricature! Then the sparkling magnificent matadores and banderilleros, dressed as if for a court ball and not "the bloody business which they are about," in silk stockings and braided breeches, all silver and satin, with their scarlet cloaks, and parti-coloured scarves, and tiny swords that look toys and yet kill a bull at one skilful stroke; their hair gathered up behind and tied in a natural pigtail with a little jaunty cap on the top of it. These fellows, the Murats of the ring, as nimble as antelopes, as graceful as leopards, as courageous as lions, are dressed effeminately and walk mincingly like dandy dancing-masters. Last of all come the pages of the kennel, each tugging sideways at a leash of mastiffs as big as himself; a formidable race of dogs used only for the bull-fight, and then used only on very rare occasions, when the bull refuses to attack and is condemned by the inexorable crowd as a coward, to die what is considered a disgraceful death for him, by these dogs which are slipped and fly with an "unerring instinct" to the poor brute's tenderest parts. He has not a chance with them; they kill him horribly in a few seconds. But this seldom happens; I never saw it. The whole cortège passes slowly round the ring bowing to the governor, who then throws the keys of the bull-pen to the alguazils, and authorises the "sport" to begin. Again the trumpets sound, the picadors take their places, the banderilleros adjust their cloaks and scarves, the doors of the pen are thrown open from within, and in rushes the bull snorting and tossing up the sand. It is impossible not to feel a strange thrill at that moment. But I shall not inflict on you any description of what follows; with much that is sickening to see, much that is cruel, the barbarism of

the whole thing is certainly ennobled somewhat by a marvellous display of skill and daring, which, if you can sit out the first impressions of disgust, begins to exercise a horrible fascination over you as the spectacle proceeds.

The glory of Madrid is certainly the picture-gallery—the finest I have yet seen in Europe—and I am amazed at the impudent nonsense of half that is said about it by Ford in the handbook. Pictures which he describes as ruined by the cleaners and restorers have obviously never been touched at all—are, in fact, in perfect condition, and this is notably the case with most of the Titians. The much over-praised Raphaels have undoubtedly suffered greatly from barbarous mishandling. But my own conviction is that they never at any time were deserving of their reputation. No amount of cleaning and restoring can possibly change the entire colouring and style of a master, and these pictures are all hard, bricky, and sooty. The King of the Gallery is, beyond all question, Velasquez, of whose miraculous genius it is impossible to form any fair idea till you see the results of it here. As regards mechanism, he is certainly the Shakespeare of painters; there is scarcely any paint on his canvas, which is indeed barely covered, and as for colours, he could not possibly have put more than half-a-dozen on his palette. I don't believe he ever made any preparatory sketch for any of his great pictures—certainly there is no trace or record of any such sketches—none of his pictures are what modern artists would call finished, and yet, by Jove, the effect is—not Art—but Nature itself. His figures breathe the air, and stand on the ground, and do what they ought to be doing, as no other painted figures ever did before. Every stroke of his brush is visible, and every stroke of his brush is a master-stroke. No man could have painted the pictures you see of Velasquez at Madrid, showing a mechanical mastery, and an experienced facility of effect—only approached by Rubens—without having painted immensely and carefully before. Yet how few pictures

of Velasquez are there even here, and elsewhere still fewer! What, I wonder, has become of the rest? Hundreds of them must have been destroyed. The Titians here are very fine ones, and not the least fine is the great portrait of Charles V. on horseback, of which there is a copy on the wall of the staircase at Knebworth, once supposed, as you know, to be a portrait of Sir Rowland de Lytton! Apropos of that, I find here a large picture of "The Flight into Egypt"—much copied—and undernamed *L'Orbello* (a name I don't know), of which there is in the great drawing-room at Knebworth a reduced copy, boldly catalogued as an original by some other artist. I must write to my father about it. I intend to pass all my leisure hours at Madrid in learning Spanish, and copying pictures. But as yet I have had no leisure hours to pass. As for society here, there is more of it, and what there is is more agreeable than at Lisbon. Old Mdme. Montijo—the mother of the Empress Eugénie—is a very hospitable and charming old lady, and has a tolerably agreeable house. She is now nearly stone blind. We have now at last got a small, but clean, and not uncomfortable apartment unfurnished at the rate of £200 a year, and the hire of furniture, to complete what I already have of my own, brings the cost of the whole house up to £300 a year. It is the cheapest thing I could get, and has the advantage of being close to the Prado—almost in it—a great advantage for the children and nurses, who can there get such daily exercise as the heat allows of, without crossing the crowded part of the town. I am rather on the *qui vive* about our present professional prospects.

The period covered by Robert Lytton's sojourn at Madrid was one of political agitation in Spain. The contending parties were the Remestas or Progressistas, who desired a Republic, and the Union Liberals, who were for reform of the Monarchy. The motive power of both was, in Robert Lytton's opinion, personal

ambition. As a nation, Spain appeared to him to be without a political instinct.

To JOHN FORSTER. *August* 5, 1868.

In Spain there is no such political entity as that which elsewhere is properly called "The People." Here the people is an inert and inorganic body, politically regarded. To speak more accurately, Spain is a great collection of *local* populations, each having its local laws (which have never been codified), its own local interests, sentiments, and system, which are never affected for better or worse by any political change at Madrid. The only bond of union between these local populations is a common sentiment of national pride, which is very strong, and of contemptuous dislike and mistrust of all that is not Spanish. Whatever touches this, touches the *whole* people: and nothing else. Were a foreign Government to interfere in Spain, even on behalf of a popular cause, that cause would become unpopular, because it would represent the foreigner. If a Spanish Government chose to go to war with the Queen of the Sandwich Islands, that war would become popular, taxes notwithstanding, because it would represent the national honour. If a Spanish Minister were to proclaim Free Trade, or any sensible approach towards it, there would immediately be a revolution, because that would interfere with *local* interests, and no others have any political force. There could, therefore, be no greater mistake than Lord Palmerston's old notion, that by getting a Liberal Government in Spain he could get a Liberal Commercial Policy out of it. No Government in this country could survive such an attempt, and therefore none would make it. One other sentiment only is common to all Spain—all Spaniards—religious pride. It is merely another form of *National Pride*—pride in what is *Spanish*, and identified with all that Spaniards are proud of, which is eminently the case with the

Roman Catholic religion. A Spanish peasant, it is true, will blaspheme the Virgin a dozen times a day as a matter of course, and a Spanish Minister will not scruple to confiscate Church property for secular purposes, but that is doing only as you please with your *own*, not tolerating the presence of what is *not* your own, which neither Spanish peasant nor Spanish Minister will do if he can help it. Consequently when English editors talk about the Spanish Government being benighted they should remember that the Spanish nation is even *more* benighted than its Government, and to expect enlightenment and liberality as the special fruit of representative government in Spain is to forget that in no country and at no time has representative government ever been able to exist in *advance of* public opinion which it is simply the business of representative government to *represent*. A worse form of government for such a country as Spain could not be devised, and it is well worthy of the illogical vanity of the English who set it up here. All this being the case, it is obvious that Spanish politics are the special manufacture of a professionally *Political Clan*. This class is composed of generals, journalists, and priests, whose sole political instrument is the army, and whether it is General A or Editor B who makes the Government or upsets it, the Spanish populations care not a brass button. It is necessary to bear this in mind in order to appreciate the real character of what foreign journals describe as a popular cause, a popular party, or a popular movement in Spain.

In the month of August 1868 the Lyttons moved from Madrid to the seaside, and the following letters are written from St. Jean de Luz :—

To Mr. G. Brackenbury. *Hotel de la Poste, S. Jean de Luz, Basses Pyrénées, August* 26, 1868.

My dear George,—. . . I meant, of course, to work very hard here. But I have done nothing save the para-

phrase of a very curious Polish poem—which, if I publish it, as I think of doing, in some magazine, I will send you—and some translations of the poems attributed to Gallus. Do you know them? I think they can't be earlier than the age of Hadrian. They are exceedingly pretty; and two of them are the undoubted originals of the lines in *The Passionate Pilgrim* beginning "Take, O take those lips away,"[1] and Ben Jonson's song in *The Silent Woman*, "Still to be neat, still to be dressed," &c. I am reading Pascal and Epictetus, and were I not very much lazier than any man should be who has two such energetic teachers, I should perhaps inflict upon you a long account of my impressions of them. But of Epictetus I must say, if you don't already know him, get him immediately; read, mark, learn, inwardly digest, and do all except worship him. I know of no teaching diviner than his, except that of the four Gospels; I don't except the Apostolic writings, nor those of any of the Christian Fathers with which I am acquainted. There is an excellent translation of him by Higginson (Sampson Low, &c., publishers). . . . Ever, dear George, your most affectionate R. LYTTON.

To John Forster he writes about *The Spanish Gypsy*,[2] which he had just read:—

I fancy I must think all *you* think about *The Spanish Gypsy*—indeed the failure is surprising, almost incredible—and yet I think something more. It is the failure of no ordinary mind, and I am immensely tolerant of æsthetic defects wherever, in despite of them, I find the presence of mind—not merely of a faculty—which nowadays so often takes the place of a mind. . . . I have been trying to read the *Nouvelle Héloise* again, but with pain and labour, and impressions very different from those with which I first read it—years ago—almost as a child. Nothing grows old-fashioned so fast as the literature

[1] This song also occurs in *Measure for Measure*, Act iv. sc. 1.
[2] By George Eliot.

of sentiment, and the book now seems to me simply disgusting.

To his Father. St. Jean de Luz, August 13, 1868.

I am reading Pascal. His life interests me more than his thoughts, only a very few of which I can agree with. His life, however, is to me, though a very painful, a deeply interesting and suggestive story—that of the deliberate intellectual suicide of a magnificent mind. Such men as Pascal and John Newman are solemn and terrible warnings against taking Theology *au sérieux*. They fill me with profound melancholy, and make me almost execrate the name of Religion. How immensely the whole material progress of mankind might have been accelerated by the free development of so surprising an intelligence as that of Pascal, had he not been stopped and throttled, almost at the outset of life, by the grim and cruel spectre of that torturing religious faith which is the most formidable form of the effort made by a strong character to escape from the inevitable human conditions of religious doubt. And once this vampire has fastened its fangs in a fine brain, how insensibly and rapidly it distorts and destroys all intellectual honesty in its noble victim!

To Mr. Farrar. *Hotel de la Poste, San Juan de Luz, Basses Pyrénées, France, August* 15, 1868.

My dear Friend,— . . . Did I ever tell you (I think I did) the story of the long and animated correspondence which has lately been (and for aught I know may still be) going on between the Academy, the Government, and the municipality of Madrid, *in re* the word "Boulevard," the introduction of which Gallicism into the street nomenclature of Madrid has been prohibited by the Academy. But the municipality is refractory, and claims the right to import French words as well as French

civilisation. The Academy is furious, appeals to the Minister of the Interior, and invokes the secular arm to put down this municipal heresy. The Government is embarrassed. *L'affaire est grave*, and the discussion was hot when I left Madrid. I meant to send you all the details of it for the benefit of M. Arnold—the friend of Academies, and yours. If you ever come to any conclusion about the Basque, I should be very glad to hear it. 'Tis certainly a most singular language. As you will see by the address of this letter, I am here in the midst of it. I need hardly tell you that I can't understand a word of it, but I am struck by the fact that the Basques seem to have adopted all their bad words from the Spanish. Listening to some utterly unintelligible discussion between two Basque peasants, I am often surprised by a volley of Spanish oaths and expletives in very tolerable Castilian. I can detect in their talk no sound the least like any French word. By the way, I am now living in sight of the mountain which originated the word "Bayonet"—the Basques, in a battle fought there with the Spaniards, having tied scythes to their muskets (for lack of ammunition), and so charged the enemy: hence Bayonet from the Bayonnais. Such, at least, is the popular tradition. . . . I have never read *Bunsen's Life and Letters*, and know them only by reviews of them, which is the very worst way of knowing any good book. You say "Get the book." But you don't know what is the difficulty of getting books at Madrid. There is no book post from England; books can only be got from London as parcels by the rail, which is ruinously expensive. This is one of the pleasures and advantages of living abroad, and always far from any of the great intellectual centres of European society. Then, too, you have no idea what a heavy drain it is upon a small income to be constantly moving from place to place any quantity of books, however small. My own very small library costs me a fortune every time that I move. . . .

In October the desired and deferred promotion came, and Mr. Lytton was offered and accepted the post of First Secretary at the Embassy at Vienna. This promotion entailed an increase of £300 a year in his official salary, thus raising his income to £1000 a year. Before leaving Spain, they took a hurried tour through the southern provinces.

To Mr. Farrar. *Granada, Saturday,* 1868.

My dearest Friend,— . . . My present promotion is very important for me professionally, as it places me over the heads of some who were my seniors, and among the five Secretaries of Embassy from whom the next Ministers will be chosen, so that I may hope with fair luck now to be a Minister Plenipo in about three or four years. The appointment is also in other respects most pleasant. I like Vienna very much, and know it well, having already served there many years as paid *attaché* and Second Secretary—the post is better paid than any Embassy except Paris, and in many respects I prefer it to Paris. The Ambassador, Lord Bloomfield, is an old and most kind friend of mine, and his wife, Lady B., is an aunt of Edith's, and I am very fond of her. They have already most hospitably placed the Embassy at our disposal till we can find and furnish a house of our own, and it will, in all ways, be a great comfort and pleasure to have such kind and charming chiefs. . . .

I write to you from among the groves of the Alhambra, and while I write I hear and see the National Guard of revolutionised Spain playing Riego's hymn (the revolutionary march) down the narrow streets of Granada, and before the doors of the Christian Cathedral, which contains the tombs of Ferdinand and Isabella. As we must leave Spain so soon, I wished to see all that is most interesting in the south of it before we go, since such an opportunity may never occur again, and as it was also very desirable to ascertain the state of opinion in this part of the

country, I have obtained leave to run through it in a great hurry, and from here to Cordova, and thence by Seville and Cadiz I shall return to Madrid in a very few days. . . . Edith is with me. We have left the children at home. The weather is delicious—a perfect summer. How much have I to say to you, that I cannot attempt to say now. . . .

By the way, there are some features of the revolution here which are intensely interesting and suggestive to me, and from which many a moral may be drawn by all who are not blind. But I must write to you about all this by-and-by. 'Tis too long a story. When will your *Seekers after God* be published? Soon, I hope. I am *very, very* much interested about that book. Oh, how much I had to say to you about Epictetus, for whose acquaintance I cannot sufficiently thank you. Perhaps you would be surprised by the result of my impressions of your magnificent stoic, if I could only explain them, but I write this in desperate haste. My admiration for Epictetus, instead of diminishing, has greatly increased my admiration for Christianity; the ideal of Christ appears to me all the more unapproachably perfect after comparing it with an ideal so sublime as that of Epictetus. But how little the world at large *believes* in any of its ideals! I must end here, being called away by my venerable guide, Ben Sachem, to visit the King of the Gypsies, who do not call themselves, as G. Eliot calls them, Zincale, a shocking false quantity in Gypsy language. Why does she object to the Spanish word Gitana, which has the quantity she wants? We send, if we may, our true loves to your dear wife.—Ever, my very dear friend, your faithful and affectionate R. LYTTON.

CHAPTER XI

VIENNA

1869–1872, AET. 37–41

> If aught in nature be unnatural,
> It is the slaying by a springtide frost
> Of spring's own children: cheated blossoms all,
> Betray'd i' the birth, and born for burial
> Of budding promise, scarce beloved ere lost!
> —*Fable on "Prematurity."*

ROBERT LYTTON held the post of Secretary of Embassy at Vienna for the next three years, first under Lord Bloomfield, and afterwards from October 1871 under Sir A. Buchanan. They were years of great events in Europe—culminating in the Franco-Prussian War—and also memorable years in his personal life. A few months after their arrival at Vienna their third child, and second daughter—Constance Georgina—was born; in the summer of 1871 they lost their eldest child; and in the following year (March 1872) another son was born, but destined also not to survive his childhood. These were years of much literary activity in addition to professional work.

To MR. FARRAR. 1869.

Last night I took my wife to be presented at a ball at court. Both the Emperor and Empress, who were good enough to remember me, received us very kindly. I thought the Emperor looking very old and careworn since I last saw him, and the Empress, though still wonderfully handsome and retaining all her matchless

grace of movement and manner, has lost all the bloom and brilliancy of colour which she so abundantly possessed a few years ago. I dined the other day with Count Beust, a large dinner of thirty, so that I did not see much of the little great man who has an odd sort of likeness—*en laid*—to Lord Clarendon. But the dinner was interesting from the mere fact that we dined in the very room where the Congress of Vienna assembled in 1815. . . . By the way, I can't help telling you a fact about the present Emperor of Austria, which deserves the notice of your boys. He goes to bed at ten o'clock every evening unless kept up by state occasions; rises regularly and punctually, whether winter or summer, at 4 A.M. every morning, while it is yet dark, and with the exception of one hour's bodily exercise, and the minimum of time required for meals, his entire day is unsparingly devoted to severe attention to public business. I admire this—with a shudder.

To his Father. February 12, 1869.

Only fancy, half the Archduchesses and fine ladies at Vienna are reading *Lucile* and profess to like it! 'Tis the only thing of mine that is at all known abroad, and I am quite surprised to find that it really is more generally known than I could have thought possible.

To the Same. March 18, 1869.

. . . Vienna is going through a wonderful transition. The old Austrian aristocracy, though still at the head of the social world, has completely lost every grain of political power, and I don't think it will ever recover what it has lost. Even socially the *nouveau riche* class of Jews, bankers, and speculators, encouraged by Beust, and daily growing richer, is fast pushing the old gods out of their Olympus. Speculation is at fever height

here, and all the world making money as fast as it can. But I expect there will be a tremendous financial smash before long. . . .

To the Same. April 14.

I have just heard a good *mot*—it is not more than a *mot*—of Bancroft the American historian, who is now U.S. Minister at Berlin. Loftus (our Ambassador there) thought, I suppose, that the Yankee was a fair and would be an easy butt for the shafts of his peculiarly refined wit; so attacks him, before a hundred listeners on some public occasion, with, "In God's name, Mr. Bancroft, why don't you Yankees send your representatives to court like Christians, in a proper uniform, instead of turning them out all dressed in black, like so many undertakers?" Whereto Bancroft replies, "Really, Lord Augustus, I am surprised that you, as Ambassador of the Queen of England, and with those keen powers of penetration for which you are so generally distinguished, should have failed to perceive that we could not be more appropriately dressed than we are—at European courts where what we represent is the Burial of Monarchy."

Robert Lytton's relations with his father were now happily free from all misunderstanding and bitterness. "Your love and confidence," he writes to him in one letter, "are not only luxuries, they are the necessities of my being, or at least of my *well* being, the foundation of all my happiness." This "love and confidence" was fully reciprocated by the elder Lytton, and felt not only for his son but also for his son's wife, whom he had come adequately to admire and appreciate. The conditions of existence of the "diplomatic nomad" had proved a heavy drain on Robert Lytton's income, but his financial embarrassments this year were divined and generously relieved by his father.

To MR. FARRAR. 1869.

Three moves and two confinements in the course of only four years had already been a heavy drain on my income, and a fourth move from Madrid, where I had only just furnished a house, to Vienna, where my wife was again confined, had involved me in expenses so much beyond my immediate resources, that to my horror I found myself in the most serious and pressing pecuniary difficulties. I have always had a great horror of debt, and since I began life on an income very much smaller than it is now I have contrived to live upon it without appeals to my father for pecuniary assistance. . . . However, in this instance you may judge of what my own emotions now are, when I tell you that just at the moment when I was beginning to be quite in despair of any means of managing these *res angustas domi* I found that my dearest father had not only divined my embarrassment, but entirely removed the cause of it, in a manner so generous and so delicate that I am, if possible, more overwhelmed by the insight it has given me into the beauty of his character than even by the proof it affords me of the affection which such a character renders doubly precious. I can't help mentioning this to you. In the first place because the anxieties which have so incessantly absorbed my time as well as my thoughts for the last month and more, are really my sole excuse for this prolonged silence; and in the next place because I know you will appreciate the happiness it gives me to record my latest debt of love and gratitude to a father who is very dear to me.

From his Father. 12 *Grosvenor Square, April* 10, 1869.

MY DEAREST ROBERT,—I can say truly that in the matter of our correspondence I consider myself the obliged party. I have not many pleasures in life, and

in being of any use to you and freeing you from any worry or anxiety, it is more than pleasure I enjoy, it is real happiness. Pray consider it so, not only on this occasion but on any other that may occur. I don't know if there is any other father who is as fond and proud of his son as I am of mine, but I am quite sure that no father has a better reason to be so.

Robert Lytton contributed more to periodicals during the next few years than he had ever done before. Between 1870 and 1872 he wrote the following prose articles for magazines: Two articles on Lichtenstein's contemporary criticisms of English actors at the time of Garrick;[1] an article on Quinet's *Creation;*[2] an article on Germany in the *Fortnightly*, published anonymously; an article on Beethoven;[3] a biographical paper on Count Stephen Sechenzi, the Polish patriot;[4] some contributions to the *Economist* on Austrian finances; an article on the posthumous writings of Heinrich Heine.[5]

These writings were not allowed to interfere with the work, social or other, of his official life, but were dashed off in hours stolen from sleep, and often in spite of physical pain and great fatigue. A more than usually prolonged gap in his correspondence alarmed his father, who anxiously asked for an explanation of his silence. The answer was by way of recording an average day's occupation.

To his Father. December 4, 1869.

Rise at 10 A.M. You'll say that's too late. Yes, but I also roost very late. My breakfast does not occupy ten minutes, as it only consists of a cup of tea. My first immediate business is to read through all the morning

[1] *Fortnightly*, March and June 1871. [2] *Blackwood's*, February 1872.
[3] *Fortnightly*, July 1872. [4] *All the Year Round.*
[5] *Fortnightly*, 1869.

papers, about twelve or thirteen different journals all in German, which I read with the utmost difficulty, and from which I must needs extract all important intelligence, to be verified by personal inquiry in the course of the day. This task barely begun, I am sure to receive two or three letters on business calling for immediate answer. I find that two or three persons are waiting in the hall to see me on business. Lucky if I am not summoned in haste to the Ministry and kept waiting there for hours. At 12 o'clock the post is brought to me with despatches and more business letters to answer, docket, and sort. The messenger who brings it waits to take on to the Chancery my orders to the other Secretary for the day. At 1 P.M. the children come scampering through my room to their dinner and Edith's luncheon (she rises earlier than I), and then I have generally just ten minutes' time to settle with E. her plans and my own for the rest of the day, receiving her information about the house accounts, sign cheques for them, answer her questions—what visits we have to return, invitations to accept or make, &c., and then I go out. Official visits, to the Ministry on business, or other ministers and employés, to collect information or urge business in hand, &c. These calls use up the day till 3 o'clock or later. Then, if I am free by then, I call for Edith, and if not free go by myself later, to make, with or without her, *visites de politesse*—social calls, &c. This lasts till 5 P.M.; from 5 to 5.30 P.M. is taken up with reading again through the evening papers, which I find on my return home, and dressing for dinner; 5.30 P.M. dinner (children at dessert—first moment I have yet had for a chat with them); 7 P.M., either we go to the opera or visitors are sure to drop in upon us, rarely (and of late never) is there any time for reading and writing, &c.; 10 P.M., an evening party or reception of some sort every day of the week. Say we get home at 11 P.M., from then till 12, when E. goes to bed, is my only leisure hour spent with her. Edith gone to bed, my work begins, and

lasts till sometimes 5, sometimes 6, in the morning. Then I drink half a bottle of claret and devour some food, tumble into bed, and sleep at once so sound that I am with difficulty awaked in the morning, when the same round begins again. I feel indeed that for this incessant employment (or waste?) of time I have little or nothing to show. But I can't see how to change my day's programme, or make it more prolific either in study or leisure. This is the pen-and-ink work I have to do: All the political, commercial, and consular correspondence of the Embassy. I write every despatch myself (and having given most of my colleagues leave of absence, have often to copy it out myself), and this work involves a mass of *translation* as well as "redaction." It also necessitates a great deal of running about to verify as well as collect information, and seeing a host of tedious folk, and keeping my purveyors of news, &c., in good humour. In addition thereto a long report on the working classes —long ditto on land tenures. Ditto on local taxation. Daily semi-official correspondence about current cases of British subjects, &c., and last, not least, the negotiation of a Commercial Treaty, technical and tedious, which I have had what I will presently explain to be the misfortune of concluding.

It is necessary to state that this letter was written at a period when he was left in charge of the Embassy during his chief's holiday, and though it affords an almost painfully good excuse for all epistolary shortcomings, it is hardly credible that the time-table represents accurately the history of an average day. All through his life, however, there were times when the uncongenial small businesses of life seemed to choke all leisure, and produce in him a sense of hurry without achievement, and profound weariness. His motto upon these occasions might have been the very reverse of Goethe's famous "Without haste, yet without

rest." He would sometimes manage to shake himself free of such entanglements of fussy labour by escaping from his environment for a breathing space, getting away into the country, or abroad, or even hailing a bout of illness as an excuse to shut his door and stay in bed. No doubt the excessive length of his letters, and the unrivalled pains he took in any act of sympathy or friendship, greatly added to the labour of his life, but in these respects he could not change. To have ceased to be expansive and exuberant in expression as in feeling would have been to cease to be Robert Lytton altogether.

The commercial treaty which he had had "the misfortune of concluding" had been in negotiation for two years without result, but while he was left in charge of the Embassy during the autumn of 1869 he was able to announce to the Government at home that the British terms had been accepted, and that the Austrians were ready to sign at once. This was "unfortunate," for he had based his pecuniary calculations for the year on the supposition that his chief would leave him in charge of the Embassy till the following spring, but the treaty being ready for signature the ambassador must needs return to sign it, and back accordingly he came a good two months earlier than his over zealous secretary had expected!

To MR. FARRAR. *British Embassy, Vienna. Schwarzau.*

As my little holiday, dear friend, will be over to-morrow, I save this last half-hour of it for a chat with you. I have been passing a few pleasant days with some friends (Count and Countess Nako) at their delightful *château*, from which I date this letter. They are Hungarians, and very noble specimens of that fine race. The Count, a handsome, high-bred man of middle age, who has travelled much and seen a great deal of the

world, is a perfect *grand seigneur*, and his wife a woman of real genius and character; she plays and paints divinely, and I think her painting very superior to that of any modern artists I know. Certainly the only modern painting in which I recognise any of the merits of the best colourists amongst the Old Masters. The house itself is the perfection of a country house; the drawing-rooms, although museums of art, are the most luxuriously comfortable I ever inhabited, with an abundance of loggie, balconies, tented terraces and arbours, for afternoon repasts and evening *causeries*. The pleasure grounds very pretty indeed, and the surrounding country nobly variegated with wood, water, mountain, and open plain, for the beauties of which a stable full of English thoroughbreds provides easy means of enjoyment. But not the least of my luxuries here has been an excellent hookah, and plenty of good Turkish tobacco! Yesterday we had a visit from the Archduke Charles Louis, and his very charming wife (a sister of the Ex-King of Naples), and after a very pleasant *alfresco* repast in a "real bower of roses," we all started in six carriages and four for a drive *ventre à terre* through the forest—a very merry party. . . .

To-day I rode with the Count ten miles up the country to visit a very fine old *château* belonging to a Count Hoyos which stands perched on a seemingly inaccessible crag, commanding a richly wooded and watered valley. We supped in the cool by a waterfall, and drove home by moonlight. The Comte de Chambord is living near here. I have not seen and don't know him, but my hosts tell me that he scrupulously and strictly keeps up the mockery of royal state, and (such is the self-deceiving power of human and specially *royal* nature!) that he is firmly convinced, poor man, that in a few months' time he will be seated on the throne of France. As though, whatever may happen, *that* could happen! Apropos of France, I confess it is with no regret that I contemplate the advent of what I have

been long predicting in that country: but oh what nonsense our English newspapers do talk about "the wisdom of reforms in France, &c." Beust truly says, "Ce qu'un Hapsburg peut faire, un Napoleon ne doit jamais même contempler."

The Ring and the Book was published in 1869. It was the first work of Robert Browning which his old disciple did not heartily admire. "I have read Browning's first volume, and think it positively bad," he writes to his father, and then later, "I have just finished with great difficulty and weariness the fourth volume of Browning's enormous poem. I see it is immensely praised, but retain my opinion that it is a mammoth failure and marvellously unreadable." To the end of his life, while his enthusiasm for Robert Browning's early works remained as great as ever, he could not read *The Ring and the Book* with any pleasure. But it is impossible not to trace in this want of literary appreciation the decline of a personal hero-worship. The Browning glamour was at an end. He no longer lived in personal touch with him, their lives had drifted apart. Little intangible social circumstances had also helped to estrange them. Now, however, that Robert Browning was applauded by all the critics who had formerly run him down, and had become the darling of London society, Robert Lytton felt that any diminution of intimacy or admiration on his part would not be noticed or regretted by the master whose popularity was now widespread and unquestioned.

The kindly relations which had of old existed between the poet and John Forster, had also lately grown colder, but upon receiving the news that they had again communicated with something of their old friendliness Robert Lytton hastened to express the pleasure this gave him.

To JOHN FORSTER. 1869.

I am exceedingly glad to learn that Browning has written to you. I confess the sad belief that there are some kinds of wounds which can never be wholly healed—some kinds of fractures which must always leave a stiffness in the mended joint. Browning himself has finely said—

> "Twist the crab's claw, and 'twill grow again,
> But lop the lion's foot, and . . .!"

I myself have no quarrel with Browning, but he can never be again to me what he was; I can never again love him as I once loved, trust him as I once trusted; with me it can never be "glad confident morning again." . . . But even if this be so there is a pity for the past we have once cherished, that endears even the simulacrum of its resuscitation. Anything, everything is better than open, hard, perpetual estrangement between those whose friendship has been once above all the vulgarities of chance and change, and if he stretches out his hand to you, for God's sake take it.

In April 1870 his old friend and colleague, Julian Fane, died, and at the end of that year, chiefly to please Lady Westmoreland whose favourite son he was, Robert Lytton wrote the short memoir of his life which has been already quoted. "It is not the least of life's many miseries," he wrote to Forster of this death, "that ever as those with whom we have been wont to march in step are struck down one by one and drop beside us, we cannot, like soldiers fighting in square, draw closer together so as to hide those woeful gaps and keep the line unbroken; but the phalanx of friends is parted and scattered one by one without being reformed, till at last we seem to be standing alone

with an empty distance on either hand and death behind us."

Bismarck's policy to bring about a united Germany, which had been materially advanced by the Prussian successes in 1864 over Denmark and the incorporation of Schleswig-Holstein into the Germanic Federation, reached its culmination in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–1871. All Europe watched the progress of this war with profound interest. In August 1870, while the Germans were besieging Metz, Mr. Lytton wrote:—

To Lord Lytton. *August* 1870.

I agree that this is a people's war; but the character as well as the cause of the two peoples is essentially different; and while I believe that no temporary victory can give France a great future, I am persuaded that no temporary defeat can permanently deprive Germany of the immense future laid up for her in the brain and heart of the people. With France it is a war for prestige, with Germany a war for existence; and the marked difference of the popular spirit and sentiment as well as national character on either side is worthy of study by all who would forecast the future of Europe. I go further, however, in appreciation of the French point of view, and think the war is, from that point of view, as defensive a war on the part of France as on the part of her enemy. England is the only great power I know of which has ever shown willingness to sink to a second rank, without fighting to retain her supremacy. But, granting all this, if France ceases to be the first military power in Europe and loses her ability to make good the boast of the French Government, that whenever she is in earnest Europe must give way, I think it will be an excellent thing for Europe, and especially for England. . .

To Mr. Farrar. *Undated.*

There must by this time be venom enough in the veins of our French neighbours to poison the whole Milky Way. The Queen of Holland received a letter some days ago from the Emperor dated Metz, in which (she says) he writes broken-heartedly, speaking of the overthrow of France and himself as unbearable, and alluding with great bitterness to those about him, by whom he declares himself deceived and misled! Prescott Hewett (the surgeon) who saw him not many days ago, says there is not a month's life in him. How gloriously Germany has proved to the world the reality of what those who knew her have for the last five years been convinced she had in her! Every fibre of the French nation seems to have been rotted away by lies: and nothing left in it but its native ferocity. When the monkey side of its character has been used up, I suspect that the tiger side will spring forward.

The news of the battle of Sedan, fought on the 1st September, and Napoleon's surrender to the Prussian king, soon aroused the tiger side of the Parisians, and the Empress fled from an infuriated mob to England.

To Mr. Farrar. *Undated.*

Some of the Empress' fine lady friends, who have fled from Paris, went to see her the other day at Chiselhurst, and this was their conversation in the train on their way back: "Ah ma chère, quelle dégringolade! Elle porte la manche bas, sur le bras, au lieu de la porter sur l'épaule, ce qui ne lui va pas du tout. Et puis cette couleur marron, comme c'est horrible. Elle n'a plus de gout!" What a noble epitaph on the fall of the house that Jack built. *A propos* of Princess Metternich, she said to Lord Granville the other day, "Ces malheureux Français ils

veulent que l'Autriche leur vienne en aide—mais que peut faire l'Autriche? L'Autriche n'est plus qu'une puissance de troisième ou de quatrième ordre—tout-à-fait comme l'Angleterre."

After a holiday in England the Lyttons returned to Vienna in the autumn of 1870 *viâ* Bonn, Darmstadt, and Coblentz. In the course of this journey Robert Lytton held conversations with von Sybel, "with various other members of the *National Liberal* and the *Fortschritt Partei*, as well as with the Private Secretary of the Crown Princess, with Morier, with some of the French officers from Metz, and some of the wounded German soldiers."

To his Father. November 5, 1870.

As regards the German feeling towards England at this moment, what those who are most friendly to us complain of is not so much the export of arms, &c. —although that certainly sticks in their stomachs— as our apparent indifference to what they consider the moral wrong and right of their quarrel with France, and the great European issues involved in the war. Our Treaty about Belgium which implied the conviction that France and Germany were much of a muchness, our sympathies and interests being in the measure of six to one and half-a-dozen to the other, was from this point of view particularly galling to them. As regards the export of arms, it is unfortunately certain that the light in which this fact has been represented to the public by the official Berlin press has produced a deep feeling of resentment in the minds of the Germans, and especially amongst the soldiers, who are all persuaded that their comrades have been killed and wounded by English rifles. Such men as v. Sybel, however, and all the best-informed Germans with whom I have yet spoken, remark that the public mind has been artificially and pertinaciously *wrought upon* in this sense by those

journals, and speakers, who are under the direct inspiration of the Government, and they are unanimously of opinion that the motive of Bismarck's attitude on this subject is his knowledge of the intense dislike of Russia, and aversion to anything like an active Russian alliance which animate the whole national and liberal sentiment of Germany, and his wish to carry public feeling with him in his eventual avowal of the policy to which they believe him secretly pledged of supporting Russia against England on the Eastern Question. . . . At Bonn I went to look at the statue of old Arndt,[1] whom I well remember in the flesh (and very wrinkled flesh it was), when in 1849 I first visited Bonn as a boy, and was arrested shortly afterwards at Baden for wearing a *Hecker Hut*.[2] Gods, what a *changement de décore* in the theatre of this *Comédie Humaine* since then! Practical people then said that German Unity was the dream of German professors, and could never be realised. Certainly the attempt at it had lamentably failed in 1848 when the King of Prussia, rejecting the Imperial Crown which had been offered him without any priestly blessing, declared himself to be the first vassal of the Emperor of Austria. Mediævalism and Particularism, with self-congratulatory croak, were flocking back to their old comfortable perches in that babbling and bewildering rookery, the German Bund—like the ravens round Salzburg Hill, whose cawing is said to lull the secular slumber of Barbarossa. And like Barbarossa himself on Salzburg Hill, German patriotism was hiding its dreamy head in

[1] *Arndt:* Ernst Moritz, a distinguished German patriot, poet, and miscellaneous writer, born in 1769, was a native of the Isle of Rügen, educated at Greifswald and Jena, and was one of the first to rouse his countrymen to shake off the tyranny of Napoleon. His patriotic songs and eloquent pamphlets appeared in rapid succession, and contributed powerfully to the liberation of Germany. In 1818 he became Professor of Modern History at Bonn, but was soon prohibited from lecturing, and was only restored to his post in 1846. He assisted at the meeting of the National Assembly in Frankfort in 1848. Among his numerous works are the *Geist der Zeit*, and a History of Scotland. Died 1860.—*The Treasury of Biography.*

[2] Hecker, one of the leaders in the German Revolution of 1848–49. His followers were distinguished by wearing a slouch hat.

the safe gloom of academic cloisters. Only now and then it would put its head out of window for fresh air, and look across its beloved Rhine—a venerable head surrounded by a cotton nightcap, which folks told me was the appropriate headgear for such a head. On which occasions the boats on the river below used to stop under that window, and all on board o' them (students and Burghers) would sing,

"Sie sollen ihn nicht haben
Den freien Deutschen Rhein!"

Then the shaky old head, nodding its thanks from the window above, would say, "Bless you, children!" and those below replied, "Bless thee, Father Arndt!" Old Father Arndt is now so very old that his flesh is no longer even like parchment. It is cannon-colour, as hard and brown as that of the dried monks on the Kreutzburg. His old dressing-gown falls about him in classic fold like a toga, and his headgear is more like a laurel crown and less like a nightcap than it used to be. He still looks across the Rhine; and round the pedestal on which he now stands *in secula seculorum*, I saw twenty-four officers of the grand army of Metz waiting to report themselves as prisoners of war to the commandant at Bonn! I visited the hospital at Bonn, which is admirably organised and ordered by the ladies of the town. What struck me most was the *bonasse*, childish expression of all the patients' faces. Fancy those *arme Peters* having so terribly thrashed those terrible Turcos! And yet, man for man, this war has proved the German to be a better man than the Frenchman. I can't help thinking that the triumph of Germany, which has been essentially a triumph of *character*, is owing (more than the world supposes) to the remarkable sobriety and innocence of German life; its rare combination of intellectual discipline with social simplicity, of *plain living* with *high thinking*, which is to be found in no other country, and

perhaps least of all in England. Another incalculable advantage for dealing with the forces and destinies of the modern world which appears to me to be the special gift of the German, and of which the absence is certainly a special defect of the English mind, is its absolute intellectual freedom in the prosecution of thought, its implicit trust in the value of truth *as truth*. A German never begins an abstract inquiry with a *parti pris*, and an Englishman never begins one without a *parti pris*. If an Englishman begins to foresee that his researches will be destructive of his previous faith in Christianity, Protestantism, Radicalism, Toryism, or anything else that he cares for, he is immediately alarmed, and either abandons, or else warps them into the wished-for and convenient direction. An Englishman wishes that what he loves or believes should be true, and generally starts with a determination to prove that it is so. A German only cares to get at the truth of the subject whatever it be; and in an age like the present, when force is the product of intelligence, and national success must depend rather on the justice of intellectual perceptions than the fervour of intellectual predilections, I can't help thinking that this is a very valuable national qualification for the leadership of the world. Curious, by the way, a friend who was at Gravelotte the morning after the battle tells me he noticed that all the German corpses lay as composed as children in a row just put to bed by the nurse. All the French appeared to have died in a histrionic attitude—"Ruling Passion strong in death," I suppose. Bismarck calls this war *Le dernier mot du Latinisme*. . . . At Coblentz the space in front of the station for nearly half a mile on either side was crowded with French officers, so freshly arrived from Metz that they had not yet changed their uniform, which as prisoners of war they are not allowed to wear. There must have been at least 700 of them. And while we were there another train, which "like a wounded snake dragged its slow length along," arrived with several

thousand French soldiers from the same quarter. 'Twas a sight never to be forgotten. The broken flower of the great French army of imperial France—*heu quantum mutatus ab illo!* The living gravestone of a world, the *finis* to one great volume of history. What struck me in the appearance of all these men was their healthy, jolly look. None of them seem to have suffered hunger or sickness; and the officers I have seen are furious with Bazaine, and also the Emperor. If they represent the general spirit and sentiment of the French army, I fear the Napoleons have no chance at present.

After a three months' siege, Paris capitulated. On January 23, 1871, M. Jules Favre, followed by his officers, drove to the Prussian quarters at Versailles in Count Bismarck's carriage, for the purpose of arranging an armistice.

To MR. JOHN MORLEY. *February* 9, 1871.

Odo Russell, in a letter to his wife which she forwarded the other day to mine, gives a curious account of the French at Versailles:—"Favre, on the occasion of his second visit, then brought with him General Beaufort and three staff-officers to arrange the military details of the capitulation. Some hot punch was given them at the outposts, which the empty stomachs of the poor fellows generously passed on to their empty heads. They were received by Colonel Steinfeldt, who remarked to General Beaufort that he hoped the negotiations would lead to peace. The General turned to his officers and said, 'Vous entendez, c'est la paix.' Said officers immediately set to and danced the cancan, whilst the French General rapturously kissed and hugged the Prussian Colonel—much to the surprise of the latter. Favre apologised to Bismarck for their *émotion*, as being the effect of Prussian punch upon Parisian hunger. Finally they were carried away and put to bed, to get sober and fit for business as soon as

might be. Favre dined with Bismarck, and eat enough for three years. Bismarck thinks he saw him surreptitiously pop a beefsteak into his pocket to take home to his wife!"

On the 7th of March 1871 the Prussian headquarters at Versailles were broken up. From his old friend Comte de Gobineau, who was completely ruined by the war, Mr. Lytton received a letter, giving the experience of an eye-witness of the conduct of the Prussians during the period of their occupation of French territory.

From Comte de Gobineau *to* Robert Lytton.
March 1871.

Il se peut qu'on vous parlera des brutalités personelles commises par les Prussiens. Dites à tous ceux qui parlent ainsi que moi, j'ai eu dans ma maison 60 officiers et 500 soldats de toutes armes, aussi dans mon pays plus de 3000 troupes prussiennes; et qu'on n'a ni volé une paille, ni insulté une femme, ni effrayé un enfant. Je tiens à vous dire cela, parcequ'il y a des gens qui semblent croire que les défaites sanglantes, les désastres sur le champ de bataille, les récoltes dévastées, les villages brulés, les exactions gouvernementales, tout cela n'est pas assez, sans inventer à la journée pour rendre les choses plus écœurantes qu'elles ne le sont. Que de canaille, mon Dieu, que de canaille!

The French capital had barely been released by the Prussian army when it again underwent the horrors of a siege at the hands of Frenchmen. From the beginning of April to the end of May Paris was held by the Communists, and besieged by the troops who had replaced the Prussians at Versailles. The assassinations committed by the Communists were summarily avenged when Paris was once more in

the hands of the self-appointed government, under the Presidency of M. Grévy, and the Premiership of M. Thiers.

To Mr. John Morley. *June* 8, 1871.

These miserable Versaillais have (as I expected) contrived to nearly efface the effect of the crimes they profess to punish, by their own excesses and atrocities, which are quite as bad as those of the Commune, but to my thinking not by any means so profoundly discouraging. The ruffianism of those who only aspire to rule, or repress society, is a temporary misfortune; the ruffianism of those who professedly aspire to *regenerate* society is an inexpiable curse. I can find nothing in my own reflections to mitigate the disgust and discouragement with which I have contemplated—not the fall of the Commune, but the manner of its fall; in which not one of its many very able leaders has displayed a single sentiment or quality bequeathing aught but shame to the memory, and disappointment to the hopes of mankind. Plenty of cleverness, yes; plenty of determination—much cruelty—a deal of selfishness; but nothing morally noble and beautiful that I can detect. I can very well suppose that the Commune may have been swarming with spies. Organised treachery is generally the consequence of organised mistrust. The longer I live, the greater grows my misfaith in all purely political and social contrivances for improving the world. I reverence, and more than reverence, the enthusiasm of our young Radicals. I hope something from it. It seems to me indeed the only thing left to hope in; for nothing can be done without enthusiasm, and there is none left amongst the so-called "Conservative" champions of bad things as they are. But my own enthusiasm is checked by the conviction that our most hopeful reformers are beginning their work at the wrong end, and that nothing can come of work so begun but topsy-turvy. I don't forget the atrocities

perpetrated from age to age in the name of Christianity, but I cannot doubt that the Christian method, which begins with the *individual*, is preferable to the revolutionary one, which begins with the *mass*. The revolutionary impulse is always trying to make avalanches. But its material is mud. And with mud you can only make messes. . . .

Robert Lytton's children had begun to count for much in his life. In one letter he writes that he looks forward to the hours spent in the nursery playing with them. Rowland, the eldest, was now a boy of six years old, handsome, high-spirited, and gifted. "Developing," his father writes of him, "into the brightest, surest promise of all my heart could hope or dream to find in the future inheritor of what I am most proud of—the name and title of my dear father." That father had already been making anxious inquiries as to the child's education, and was told that he went to a little day-school. There in the summer of 1871 he caught the whooping-cough, which went through the Lytton nursery, but only in the case of Rowland was followed by serious illness. Various complications followed the original disease, and an intermittent fever was fought for weeks. By the end of June, after a bitterly cold spring, the weather grew mild and the family were able to leave Vienna for a country place called Edlach. A slight improvement was not maintained, and after "a very painful illness of three months, and fifteen days of acute, unceasing, and complicated agony," heart-rending to his parents to witness, the boy died on the 26th of July.

To his Father. *July* 30, 1871.

My poor brave beautiful Rowland. His strength, alas, only seemed to prolong his dying agonies. The patience

and sweetness with which he bore them were heart-breaking. Three days before his death his head was wandering —we were all around his bed—one of those long woeful nights, expecting every moment to be his last. Suddenly he broke into his little evening prayer, "God bless father and mother and little sisters, and pray God bless Ewy" (his nurse). "Ewy, too," he added, "Ewy, too!" Then, seeing us all in tears, he added, "Don't cry, don't cry," and his head sank. We thought the end had come, but he lived three days longer. Once he said to his mother, "Mother, am I a good boy?" "An angel," she said. He seemed to think a moment and then whispered softly, "At last a good boy. Good at last!" I think these were his last coherent words. I have one consolation. It is that his short life was happy, so far as human care and affection could make it so. And that whilst he lived his health and comfort and poor little pleasures were the first consideration in all our plans and thoughts. . . . I am satisfied that whatever may now have become of him, my tortured child is at last released from all suffering, and saved, too, from much which would, I think, have made me pause ere I accepted it, if the gift of life had been offered me before birth on even the most favourable conditions.[1]

The child was buried in the pretty Protestant cemetery in a suburb of Vienna, where a living garland of flowers soon grew over his grave. The grief of the parents had to be endured alone. It

[1] The following lines, written for his wife on the death of their son, may be of interest :—

They say he is an angel now,
Who knows what that may be?
I only feel, I only know
My child is lost to me.

I know that there were little feet
Which never never more
Will sound about the house, or meet
My own feet at the door.

could not be shared. It was of no public nature. "I know that outside the circle of our stricken house," writes Robert Lytton, "no one in the world will miss all that we laid yesterday in that little foreign grave. No fame, no power, no public honours have been left by our loss without an owner. Better so." But within their home this sorrow was of a nature to leave its permanent mark on both parents. For his wife at this time, worn out with grief and watching, and again in delicate health, Robert Lytton felt the tenderest anxiety, and for himself, though he accepted the personal loss with bowed head and a resigned spirit, the memory of the child's prolonged and cruel sufferings entered into his soul and shook his faith, not in the existence or love of God, but in many of the accepted creeds of orthodox Christianity. The condolences of his dearest friends jarred upon his shaken nerves. One wrote to him

And little hands, that will not twine
Ever again, or weave
Their nestling fingers into mine,
Nor pluck me by the sleeve.

A little child I used to kiss,
And scold, too, now and then,
And this was yesterday ; and this
Will never be again.

His little naughtinesses dear,
Each darling wilful whim,
These have no place in heaven, I fear;
And these I loved in him.

O mother, mother, hide away
The little broken toy,
Never again to school or play
Will come our buried boy.

And let the little letters be,
His lessons all are done,
There's nothing, nothing left for thee
To teach thy seraph son.

August 23, 1871.

that their boy would be "a guardian angel," another that "those who die in childhood are restored to a higher career elsewhere, of which their short life is a part."

To his Father.

Pretty and gracious theories, which must be comforting to those who can hold them as truth or even cherish them as hope. I have no such consolation What know we? Every life ends at a dead wall. Each according to his fancy, his temperament, associations, hopes, and wishes, paints over its naked surface some imaginary prospect. But the wall is there, and beyond it we know absolutely nothing. I do greatly hope that the dead continue to live somehow and somewhere, retaining the individualities we knew and loved whilst they were with us, and that we may hereafter meet them again. But I see no fact in life or in death to confirm this hope, and many facts which seem most sternly to contradict its comforting assurance. Still ignorance is willing—eager even—to be deceived by hope.

This attitude of mind distressed his father, who mistook it for unmanly repining. He wrote to explain that it was not his loss that wrung from him any cry of impatience.

I feel that loss indeed more heavily than I could have anticipated, and I feel it more and more every day. But so far as I am myself the sufferer by it, complaint or even impatience are the last sensations that could occur to me. If I were to regard it as a penal infliction (what some people call a *chastisement*)—and I confess I do not so regard it—still I should feel bound to admit to my own conscience that it is fully merited. If I were to regard it merely as incidental to the regular order of Nature, without attaching to it any moral significance (and this is not the light in which I regard it), still I should feel

that the loss of a beloved child is one of many sorrows too universal not to be borne with resignation, and death is certainly not the most painful kind of lifelong separation from those we have loved. Regarding it, however, as I do, as part of my spiritual education, I am satisfied that my feelings ought to be only those of trustful gratitude mingled with a holy awe. I am not incapable of such feelings. But there is a terrible memory which comes between me and them and seems still to claim possession of all my emotions. It is only *human* love that experience obliges me to recognise as compatible with cruelty. My conception of divine love is too involuntary, and withal too logical to submit to any suggestion, even from experience, which outrages it. For eight days and nights I have witnessed, helplessly as well as hopelessly, the most excruciating torments culminating in hideous convulsions of pain, and ceasing only with life in an agony of suffocation. This vision haunts me night and day, and I don't think I shall ever be indifferent to it. At present every thought which rises within me armed to confront it is plunged by it into an abyss of horror. My sensations would be those of unmitigated indignation, if indignation were possible towards merely physical phenomena. When Science tells one that all this physical pain was the physical result of certain physical causes, and that beyond those physical causes I can know nothing, I bow the head and submit in silence. When Religion says she knows a great deal more than Science, and affirms that these torments, though distinctly the result of physical causes, were indirectly the intentional act of a supreme Being as beneficent as he is omnipotent, I say, 'No! a thousand times no! Omnipotent perhaps, but certainly not beneficent.' When Philosophy comes to the rescue and whispers that the very sentiment of indignation which is raised by the contemplation of cruelty, and which I feel to be a just sentiment, is itself a direct gift from the Being against whose apparent cruelty it protests

so strongly, I answer that she has merely restated the problem which wrung from her this most inadequate conjecture. Then when I go to my own heart and conscience for counsel, I find that my faith remains unshaken in the beneficence of that divine will, with which man in his best moments is conscious of direct relations, but that my acquiescence in the theological attribution of omnipotence to that divine will is very greatly shaken. Forced to discard one of two attributes which are incompatible, I sacrifice the one which is not claimed as an absolute necessity, either by my heart or my imagination, for the character of a Being whose existence I can only realise by means of my heart and imagination. And, indeed, such a sacrifice seems necessary to reconcile both with my reason. For I cannot intellectually entertain the conception of a God capable, for instance, of enclosing a space between two parallel lines, or constructing a mathematical figure which shall be simultaneously a circle and a square. Yet these contradictions are not half as great as that which is involved in the idea of a God who is simultaneously both good and evil.

I find myself a mere atom in a boundless universe of which I cannot even conjecture the contents, much less the origin. But the conclusion seems irresistible that throughout this universe intelligence must be as infinite as matter. If so, I can experience no difficulty whatever in referring all the psychical phenomena of my own being to direct relations between man and a Being so immeasurably superior to man in intelligence, spiritual beauty, and power as to be absolutely divine within the limits of those relations. But it does not necessarily follow that such a Being, because exceedingly powerful, is therefore omnipotent. Suppose that His relations with man were those of a wise and beneficent sovereign, who loves all his people, and is incessantly studying to promote their happiness and secure their welfare, but who nevertheless cannot do this without

the intelligent co-operation of his subjects, whilst at the same time it is equally impossible for him to raise the intelligence of his subjects all at once up to the level of his own, which is immeasurably superior to theirs. Such a Divinity would have as much need of Humanity, as Humanity has need of *it:* and without such reciprocity of need, what active relations can there be between God and man, or what sufficient explanation of man's existence? The idea of omnipotence destroys at once all these conditions of spiritual reciprocity, and I confess that it also destroys in my own mind the entire conception of divine *personality.* I can only associate omnipotence with an impersonal pantheism. My heart and soul rigidly refuse admittance either to the Jehovah of the Jews, or the Elohistic Deity of the Chaldeans. My whole moral being also revolts against the acknowledgment of any God who must be fitted into the monstrous scheme of the Christian Atonement. But to the less exacting appeal of a God all good, but not all powerful, my heart and soul fly open in a flood of tears, and I involuntarily cry, 'Yes, Father! I understand. Thou needest my love even as I need thine. Thou too, although thou art above it, hast to contend with evil, in order to save me who am beneath its influence. Help me to help thee, and here or elsewhere to fight in thy cause for thy kingdom, against all the powers of darkness. For surely this is what I was born for?'

This at least is the only refuge I can anywhere find from the phenomena of evil. True, they remain around me, unexplained and inexplicable, in all their dreadful mystery. But at least they do not darken the face of God; for nothing in the creed I cling to compels me to attribute them to my Heavenly Father.

Robert Lytton's nature, like that of his own hero Glenaveril, "was one that suffering sours not," and

from the struggle with grief he rose "sorrowful but not sullen."

> "And so along
> His wonted ways, with mien unchanged, he moved,
> Still loving as before and still beloved."

But his health suffered. Neuralgia became a constant complaint, and in the following winter he was laid up with pleurisy followed by sickness and lethargy.

After Rowland's death he and his wife went for a short trip to Venice. This place was like an "opium dream" to him. "Whenever I set my foot on Italian soil," he writes, "I have a strange feeling of having come home, and it is always a pang to go back to school again."

The posts of Secretary at Munich and Stuttgart were offered him in the autumn of 1871, but refused on the ground that they involved a loss of position and no increase of salary. In March 1872 his wife gave birth to another son, who was this time given the name of Edward after his grandfather. In the succeeding summer they rented a country house near Vienna.

To JOHN FORSTER. *Donnermühle, May* 4, 1872.

A most comfortable and picturesque house in the midst of a beautiful garden, the garden surrounded by a trout stream, the very ideal of trout streams, the stream surrounded by woods and hills. A fountain plays before my door, the hay lies upon the lawn, and the children in the hay. Yesterday I hung a hammock in the shrubbery, and this morning I have been swinging myself in the hammock. Besides the flower-garden, I am the possessor of two kitchen-gardens, a greenhouse, a hothouse, a little gig and pony, an enormous dog, and

a she goat, the Amalthea of our Infant Jupiter, also a library of very fairly chosen books, German, French, and English, a piano and an organ. . . . Adjoining the house is a little water-mill which saws wood as well as grinding flour, and which makes a very pretty feature in the landscape. Hence the name of our present abode, Donner Mühl—Thunder Mill—why thunder I don't know, for the mill only roars like a sucking dove. . . . At present my chief occupation is making paper balloons for my children; it is a pleasanter one than making poetry or despatches, and less mischievous than making love.

The occupation of "balloon-making" was not for long the most consoling or absorbing pastime. He was soon more than ever engrossed in the favourite pursuit of writing verse. In the next two years the poems contained in the volumes published under the title of *Fables in Song* were written with great rapidity, and in spite of days filled with official duties. Their composition is intimately associated with a friendship which dates from Robert Lytton's first appointment at Vienna, and which, perhaps, exercised a more powerful influence upon him as a writer than any other friendship of his life.

M. de Villers held the post of Saxon Secretary at Vienna. He was a man in whom French wit mingled with German fancy, a poet who did not write poetry, a musician who did not write music, a scholar, and a romantically devoted friend. He was a bachelor and poor, and Robert Lytton cherished dreams of a literary partnership which should prove in its results a very gold mine to them both. Dream of an Eldorado never realised.

Under this sympathetic influence, however, a new poetical vein was struck, the most original and individual which had yet inspired Robert Lytton's pen. The poems were called Fables, but differed widely

from the received classic models, and their line of thought was fanciful and philosophical rather than didactic. They dealt with the problems of life not so much in order to "point a moral" as to reveal a truth. Things animate and inanimate, things human and impersonal, were all introduced with a free disregard of the conventions of fable to serve the purpose of expressing the author's mind on the humours, the piteousness, the sin and the virtue, the sympathy and heartlessness which life revealed to him. The author's own final judgment of these poems at the close of his life was that in them his "mental personality first found an expression of its own"—that there was to be found in them "the free play of an individual mind and an original fancy over a varied field of literature and reflection upon human life and character," and that the humour to be found in them was peculiar to the poetic individuality of the writer.

The ideas for these poems crowded upon him faster than he could write them down. They were all talked over with Villers, but as he could speak no English they were first written down in French prose, submitted in this form to his friend's criticism, and then re-expressed in English verse. Robert Lytton found this a wholesome check upon undue haste and carelessness in composition. It also put to a test the value of the main idea of the poem. "If," he writes, "I find that the idea of my fable, when plainly stated in prose, is commonplace or otherwise unsatisfactory, I go no further with it. If it stands the test, I put it aside till I feel in a lyrical vein, and then the verses generally flow faster than I can write them down." In this manner the rough drafts of no less than twenty-one of these lyrical fables were written in a month.

When submitted to Lord Lytton's judgment, although he criticised their title on account of their

wide departure from the accepted models of fable, he expressed whole-hearted admiration of their poetry. "I am positively delighted with your last fable, 'The Stag,'" he writes. "The paragraph from the 'Dim winds,' &c., down to 'Borne upon' has no equal for the most exquisite diction out of the most perfect melodies of Shelley or, in a different way, Milton's young poems." Of "The Eagle and his Companions" he wrote:

> I return your poem with profound admiration—in pure poetry you have never equalled it. It is redundant in beauties. I felt disappointed when I found that the speaker of such splendour of diction and thought was only an eagle, and did not reconcile myself to the descent from tragedy into fable. Nor to the mole when he comes to his pipe and pot of beer. But having finished the whole, I am content to have such jewellery in any form of setting.

In all Robert Lytton's poetical compositions henceforth the rapid, and even at times jarringly sudden, transition from serious to comic verse was a leading characteristic. It is to be found in many of the fables, in the long poems of *King Poppy* and *Glenaveril*, and the two moods are blended even in the lyrics of *Marah*. Lord Lytton judged rightly when he wrote to his son about these fables: "I am of opinion that your truest vein is in stately sustained verse, whether blank or in varied rhymes (not the couplet) of the heroic length. Good as your short-versed lyric strains are, I think they do not approach your longer verse. And there you have living rivals; in the longer, as shown in this poem,[1] none." But once more he deplored the prevailing defect when he added, "I also feel that you do not study condensation enough. I wish you would con-

[1] *The Eagle.*

descend to ask yourself, as Macaulay said he did when composing an oration, 'Will this bore?' A crowd of imagery, when not rapidly bringing out a new division of thought, is apt to fatigue the reader's mind."

He still desired that his son should weave "a woof of more popular substance," and apply his mastery of verse to "one grand subject with human interest and of uniform sustainment." "Don't you think," he writes, "that you and your friend with whom you seem to work so well could succeed in the composition of a great comic epic, and that it would be well worth your while to try? This would be quite new ground, for Hudibras is not cosmopolitan or interesting. *Candide* with Pangloss (omitting indecencies) would have been a great poem if in verse. *Don Juan* is our best, but it is a fragment, and the thing I mean would be higher by not admitting purely sentimental episodes." Robert Lytton carried this suggestion to his friend, and it eventually bore fruit in the fanciful tale of *King Poppy*—his highest effort in the direction of allegory—and in *Glenaveril*, a tale of social life, which would, I believe, have gone far to satisfy his father's ideal of a poem with a broad human interest, could his advice to study condensation have been followed to the extent of reducing it to half its length.

The publication of these poems much interested another friend of this period with whom Robert Lytton held a constant and most intimate correspondence for many years — Mr. John Morley, who was then editor of the *Fortnightly Review*. In this magazine many of the fables were published between 1871 and 1873.

Mr. Morley wrote after first reading them :—

Your fables reached me yesterday morning, and I dived into them last night after dinner, my spirits not

artificially excited by anything beyond three glasses of dry sherry—diluted. I was seized with hearty and genuine delight. Their spirit and fire are of the very best, swift, sustained, light-winged, penetrating. In some, as 'Consolation' and 'The Rock,' where the key is more solemn, you are exquisitely happy in being grave and tragic in suggestion without the mere heavy solemnity of words. There is a fine and kosmic airiness and size given by brief plangent strokes, intermixed with light presentation of the infinitely little, which is exactly proper to your form. 'Pyrrhonism' in another vein is delightful and perfect, ingenious, unforced, and best of all overbrimming with significance. So too 'The Drag and the Wheel,' and 'Non Cuivis,' and 'Prometheus Unbound.' They are really delicious from the point of view of fables, apart from the lyric quality. They are full of fancy, fancy of an original sort, and full of sound meaning, while the verse and form seem to me most brilliant.

The elder Lytton had been reading with interest a paper by Mr. Morley in the *Fortnightly*. Upon hearing this, Mr. Morley wrote to his son:—

I am much interested by your words about Lord Lytton's impressions on my short paper. His love of letters and prolonged interest in them have long excited the greatest admiration in me, and there is nobody living whose approval in matters of style, taste, and treatment would be more valued by me.

On February 15, 1871, Mr. Morley wrote to Mr. Lytton:—

I wonder what you think of Dante Rossetti's volume, if you happened to see it when you were in England. Nobody, I suppose, believes that it contains many elements of permanent quality, or that it can ever attract more than a few esoteric souls. Yet this school has a

certain charm. It recalls old ideals of beauty and simplicity and homeliness which are rather fascinating in our time of barbarous ormolu, and its combination of sadness with full joy of the senses is perhaps wholesome by way of reaction against the wordy optimism which has made Tennyson so popular in the sentimental middle-class. Some writers talk of Rossetti being *Greek*, which is the blockhead's name for all that is not nineteenth-century British. This is nonsensical enough, but he *is* pagan, only after the mediæval type, which is the older paganism made mystic and sad, I suppose. I admit there is a grain of childishness in it all, and I see very clearly that it is only a poetic episode, or aside—the true master-current being in that wide, far-reaching, historic direction to which Hugo's *Légende des Siécles* and your own *Chronicles and Characters* point the way—still in poetry I am polytheistic, and I am particularly grateful for anything that helps me in any way to break up the hideous clerico-bourgeois amalgam that rules at present. It is true that you will never have high creative art, so long as one is content to admire work on the ground of its being effectively solvent.

This letter Robert Lytton sent to his father. Lord Lytton replied :—

From LORD LYTTON. *Torquay, February* 22, 1871.

Morley's letter to you about Rossetti serves to explain much of the prevalent error in criticism, and the prevalent vice of recent poets (only don't tell him so). There is a prevalent notion among these critics and poets, that a poet is to be like a Radical member for a metropolitan borough—a delegate to represent a special idea which his electors favour and probably all the spirit of the age. Of course he is to upset a something that has gone before, he is to be an advanced Liberal, in the way of upsetting; and the more he goes the whole hog

and rejects pearls for the last new hogwash, the more he is declared to have the divine something in the afflatus of his grunt. Thus, just as Tennyson was idolised by these critics while he was revolutionary, so now that his affectations are no longer advanced Liberalism but milk-and-water reforms, the critics want an out-and-outer to upset him; and the recent Bardlings vie with each other in spasmodic effort to be infinitely more affected in opposite directions. As he is musical, so they are discordant—

> "Their muses on the racks
> Seem like the winding of ten thousand jacks."

As he is finnicking in his neatness, they are outrageous in tawdry squalor. But the critics applaud them, "march with the age." Another fault of these critics is that they imagine a poet is to be wholly a poet, and to prove that he is so by an elimination from his mind of all those acquisitions of wisdom which are only to be gained on the prose side of intellect and life, and then having reduced poetry into its narrowest region of diction and idea, it is to say something in forms that are to be vehemently wrenched out of the language which people of good taste and good society use in common parlance, and in that something it is to express an "erotic" idea about which nobody on the prose side of life cares twopence, and if the diction be very distorted, and the idea very unintelligible, then the poet forms a "School" and has followers and imitators. A school in poetry is nearly always a senile Duncedom. And it is rather curious that while second and third rate poets have founded schools, first-rate poets do not do so. One can imitate a fellow-mortal of moderate shape and height, but one can't well imitate a Titian or an Apollo. Virgil seems to have left no school. Nor Ovid, nor Horace. Claudian and Prudentius did—Milton and Shakespeare left no school, nor can Dryden be said to have done so. But Pope left a school. Byron and Scott have not left

schools, but Wordsworth and Keats and Shelley have filled the air with the bleatings of sheep, and the pipings of shepherds reared in their Arcadias. It is a great mistake to call these three, great poets; they were genuine poets, and failed to be great because they were nothing but poets. The proof that Milton, Shakespeare, and Byron are something besides, that they take prose life with all its bearings into their poetic alchemy, is seen at once in this; you and I would be very glad of an opinion or advice upon practical life from Shakespeare or Byron—from Milton also—if you belonged to his sect and creed. But who, halting perplexed on the thoroughfares of life, would come to Shelley or Wordsworth or Keats for guidance? Heaven help him if he did. But no poet can be great if he is stinted in the essential elements of intellectual greatness, and these three men have done more to injure true criticism and corrupt true poets than all the rest of Parnassus put together.

To his Father. Vienna, March 12, 1871.

I entirely agree with what I take to be the general import of your observations on Morley's criticism of Rossetti's poems. But then, if I understand it rightly, I don't see any material difference between your own conclusion and his. Practically you are both of the same opinion that the Morris-Rossetti clique (of which I know next to nothing, though much disliking the little I know) is a tiny infinitesimal eddy, a petty episodical twist, which becomes almost imperceptible in any general view of the great main current of literature. Only Morley, I suppose, finds in it something which is rather agreeable than otherwise to his own sensations, and you, I imagine, do not. But all such mere *mi piace* differences of taste and feeling can hardly be discussed as long as they are kept in their right place. I may fall in love with a decidedly ugly woman

because I happen to find something in her responsive to something in me, which is a personal peculiarity. I am not for that reason a fool. But I should be a fool if I mistook the personal peculiarity of my sensations, in regard to her, for universal human nature, or asked others to admire my ugly mistress more than the world's acknowledged beauties from a critical point of view. I think there is no English poet whom I myself read with more intense enjoyment than Shelley; but I should never dream of critically placing him in the hierarchy of poets on an equality with Byron, in whom my intelligence clearly recognises a literary force immeasurably beyond and above him. I also go entirely with what I understand by your observation that great poets never found schools; but I think I would rather say that great poets never found little schools. It seems to me that all great poets have founded great schools. You instance Virgil and Horace. But the whole of Latin poetry is itself a school, or series of schools, founded on Greek poetry. It has only secondary originality. And therefore (even if we can fairly assume that none of the contemporary Latin imitators of Horace and Virgil have been lost to the knowledge of posterity, and that we have sufficient materials for judging such a question) it is hardly surprising that we find in the poetry of the Augustan Age nothing that can be properly called an Horatian or a Virgilian school of verse. But did any of the minor Latin poets who have survived to us figure in their own time as the heads of schools of verse? I know of none such. It is, I think, undeniable that in those subsequent literary periods which in their turn grew out of the Latin, and as the Latin had grown out of the Greek literature, both Horace and Virgil did become the heads of particular schools of verse. Even in their own times, query, was not Lucan's *Pharsalia* written in the school of Virgil? Petrarca's *Africa* certainly was, at the period when the Virgilian school was forming, and without laying too much stress on Dante,

who acknowledged his own style to have been entirely formed by Virgil, I conceive that the epic poetry of all *civilised* ages must be referred to the school of Virgil, from Tasso to Pope and Dryden, whose professed translations from Homer are really original poems composed in the Virgilian school. The case of Horace is still more indubitable. The whole modern literature of Europe has been dosed and drenched with imitations of him. *Judice* Boileau and Pope. *Judice* all the minor poets of the same period—not to mention that vast number of Horatian imitations in the form of epistles and satires which flourished fifty years ago and still figure on the shelves devoted to belles-lettres in every library.

To come to later times, Chaucer was a great poet, and the Chaucerian school is at this very moment represented by Messrs. Morris, Rossetti, and Co. Shakespeare was a great poet: and what has been the whole dramatic literature of England ever since Shakespeare, but (unfortunately) a Shakespearian school, which, destitute of its master's inimitable genius, has studiously imitated his defective form and obsolete phraseology from the days when Rowe assured the public that his tragedy of *Jane Shore* was "written after the manner of Master William Shakespeare." Look also at the Shakespearian school in Germany. All the world knows what it became in the hands of its great disciples, Goethe and Schiller, but it existed in full force before their time, as may be seen by the dramatic poems of Grabe, and other now forgotten notables of German literature. I think that both Racine and Corneille must be acknowledged great poets. Corneille certainly was. In spite of their strongly different individualities, they belong to the same school; and the school they represent despotically governed the whole dramatic literature of Europe till it was deposed by the despotism of the Shakespearian school, out of which grew the Romantic school, in all countries and in all departments of verse. Milton was a great poet, and—not to

mention the Miltonic school in Germany (of which Klopstock is only one representative out of many), Milton —like all poets who bring to its highest perfection some particular metre, as was the case also with Pope— has established a school of blank verse so supreme, that ever since Milton's time all the best writers of blank verse have been formed in and by it. Keats acknowledged himself its disciple in the composition of his "Hyperion"; Tennyson had no need to make any such acknowledgment as regards all his earlier blank verse; every line and cadence of it is Miltonic in structure. His later blank verse is entirely original indeed, but of inferior architecture. The same observation applies to Milton's sonnets, a form of verse which he also perfected; and all the best English sonnets since Milton have been more or less Miltonic in structure. I don't know whether on the whole Pope should be called a *great* poet, but there can be no doubt that he formed a large and a long, if not a great school, in which English poetry was strictly locked up for centuries. Byron certainly was a very great poet: and very great was the school he formed. It influenced all European poetry for at least a quarter of a century, and though now worn out in England is still active on the Continent. But how well I remember as a boy the productions of the Byronic school with which the English magazines then overflowed, as they now overflow with those of the Tennysonian school. Again, besides the numerous imitations of Faust which have been put forth by minor poets all over Europe, what not only is, but is also called, the school of Goethe governed German literature during the whole period of the restoration, and is still influential. But the smaller the school the more we notice it, and the more inevitable is our notice of it— because of its eccentricity, and because we do not detect in its productions merit sufficient to justify its pretensions. The imitative affectation of its disciples often ends by putting us out of humour even with the originality of their master. Surely we cannot say that the *greatest*

poets have had the *least* influence upon poetry; which is what might be erroneously understood from the statement that they form no schools of poetry. But the school started by a poet whose originality consists of thought or emotion, only attracts and admits disciples of the highest order, who bring into it some originality of their own, and give it fresh developments. Moreover, it appeals more directly and agreeably to the sympathies of the great mass of mankind—who are not poets; but who are capable of thought and emotion, and who only appreciate poetry in so far as they find in it intelligible expression of thoughts and emotions with which they have something in common. Whereas the school formed by a poet whose originality consists solely or chiefly of *form*, quickly strikes temporary root on the sandiest intellectual soil, and is soon discovered to be a mere mechanical trick which (once the secret is out) can be easily practised by a host of Homeridae of infinitesimally small intellectual power, who are incapable of providing any fresh pabulum for either the intellect or the heart of the great mass of mankind. For this reason it soon becomes unpleasant to all but its own adherents (who are fascinated by its easy peculiarity), and eventually tires out our patience.

From LORD LYTTON *to his Son. March* 27, 1871.

I don't think we much differ in our meaning as to schools in poetry, the probable difference is in the signification we attach to the word school. But I do not think either Shakespeare, Milton, Dante, or even Corneille, left what can be properly called a school. Shakespeare did but take up and continue a style and form of drama which he found existing and growing naturally out of the loose drama, partly emanating from the mysteries, partly from the example of Italian plays, with the blank verse introduced by Surrey and adapted to

the stage by Marlowe. That same style was in common with his contemporaries, notably Beaumont and Fletcher, and, dying out with them, scarcely reappeared in England before Sheridan Knowles imitated not Shakespeare but Beaumont and Fletcher. Milton's early blank verse seems to me entirely founded on *The Faithful Shepherdess*, and is very different from that in the *Paradise Lost*, in which there is a wonderful absence of the prettiness of expression used in his earlier poems, and his later style does not seem to me to have the least similarity to Tennyson's blank verse—in fact it is not reproducible except in burlesque, as in *The Splendid Shilling*. Corneille's drama grew, I think naturally, out of the classic plays of his day (in which style Richelieu wrote) and the rage for Latin style and subjects which has always more prevailed in France than elsewhere. Racine no doubt must have founded a school—Helvetius complains bitterly that in his day Corneille could have no imitators and scholars, the age was too *mesquin* and effeminate for his grandeur, and the *mollesse* of Racine was in vogue. However, I expect we are only disputing here upon verbal distinctions. What I object to in the canons of modern criticism is the assertion that poetry in order to be poetry must do something which it is not at all necessary it should do, which it sometimes does and sometimes does not, quite indifferently and irrespectively, viz. represent and embody some esoteric or intense sentiment or philosophy current in its time. I don't think Sophocles did that; and I think that Euripides did. I think Dante did it to a certain degree; that Tasso did not, and that Ariosto was of no philosophy and no time, but sports through all philosophies and all times. I think Pope especially represents the genius of his time—*in London*, not at all out of London; but that Dryden is much too discursive, too shifting, to represent any one form of sentiment or thought. He seems to me a very wide and daring experimentalist in art, according as he takes art—viz. as a plastic

form for his versatile industry. He experimentalises equally in improving Corneille and improving Shakespeare. Now he rivals Donne in conceits, now he excels Waller in simplicity and good sense, and in his old age gathers himself for an experiment in improving Chaucer. In fact he seems to me to have been a most practical, capable workman—making wonderfully clever use of all the tools of language at his command, but not attempting any esoteric purpose and all the better for that, according to his own idiosyncrasy. Now a philosopher has one idea to represent, and therefore he founds a school. We say justly the school of Epicurus or of Zeno, of Locke or Kant, or nowadays of Darwin. But it does not follow that a poet does the same. Occasionally he does, as the representation of a certain philosophical unity, and it is only when he does this that he founds a school properly speaking. Perhaps Tennyson may found a school as a sort of eclecticism in rhythm and expression of certain poets who never completed themselves, and were immediately before him, viz. Keats and Wordsworth and Shelley, popularising them into a certain tame whole. But I don't think it will be a school fifty years hence, for in its way it is as artificial as Gray's, and never attains to Gray's originality or verbal finish in Gray's masterpiece, *The Elegy*.

The interest of these letters lies in the evidence they afford of the complete freedom and intimacy which existed between father and son, and they give some idea of the many literary talks which they held together.

When the Lyttons left Vienna in the late autumn of 1872 Lord Lytton was living at Torquay, and there his son joined him for a period of two months. He arrived alone, but his wife soon joined him.

ROBERT LYTTON *to his* WIFE. *Torquay*, 1872.

My dear father met me at the station. I thought and think him looking much better than I expected. He looks not only strong but young, and seems really in good spirits. He received me with the greatest cordiality, and nothing could exceed the considerate kindness and affection with which he has ever since been "petting me," asking me to choose all I like to eat and drink, going himself this morning to order bottles of ale for me, and broaching last night bottles of champagne for me, which is the refined equivalent for killing the fatted calf. We have had much talk already, about everything, and it has all been delightful.

This was the last time they were ever together, and for father and son alike it was a time of unalloyed happiness, leaving behind it a halo of peace and affection over their relationship.

CHAPTER XII

ENGLAND AND PARIS

1873–1874, AET. 41–43

Children are born, about whose lucid brows
The blue veins visibly meandering, stream
Transparent: children in whose wistful eyes
Are looks like lost dumb creatures in a crowd,
That roam, and search, and find not what they seek.
These children are Life's aliens. The wise nurse
Shakes her head, murmuring, "They will not live."
A piteous prophecy, yet best for them
The death that pitifully premature
Remits the pitiless penalty of birth;
Letting the lost ones steal away unhurt,
Because unnoticed, from a world not theirs.

—*Strangers.*

In the winter of 1872–1873, Edward, Lord Lytton, was at work on two novels. One, *The Parisians*, was appearing anonymously in the monthly numbers of *Blackwood's Magazine;* the other, *Kenelm Chillingly*, was not published till after his death. He read this last novel aloud to his son and daughter-in-law while he was composing it. After his death Robert Lytton wrote of it to his friend Villers, "Je ne puis jamais juger de ce livre avec sangfroid —ce sera toujours celui que j'aimerai le plus de tous ses ouvrages—parceque la derniere chose qu'il a fait était de m'en lire le manuscrit, et la premiere chose que j'avais à faire après était d'en corriger les épreuves, et tout cela est rempli de souvenirs qui me font toujours saigner le cœur."

In the character of Lily the novelist recalled the earliest and the tenderest romance of his boyhood, the story of which has been most pathetically recorded in his autobiography. On the day when the chapter describing Lily's death was written, the man of seventy was so shaken with the memory of the emotion of the boy of sixteen, that he was seen by his son walking hurriedly out of his room in complete self-forgetfulness, with tears streaming down his face.

Lord Lytton had been for some time suffering cruelly from an abscess in the ear, but his life was not known to be endangered by it. His son and daughter-in-law left Torquay on the 4th of January. After they had left he wrote to Mrs. Lytton (the last word she ever received from him), "Certainly I hope that there will never be shyness again between either of us. I fancy I am the shyer of the two. Of course I missed you very much. Sulked, would not drive out, and have been reading the lives of St. Francis de Sales and Montalembert as examples of patience under loss."

On the 17th a telegram reached Robert Lytton in London stating that the inflammation in the ear was worse. He started for Torquay at once, and arrived to find his father unconscious. "It is much worse than I feared," he wrote to his wife on his arrival; "he has had an epileptic fit to-day. Is wandering—only knows me at times for a moment. I fear, I fear, I fear, and am wretched. . . ."

Death followed a few hours after.[1]

To John Forster.

His end was painless at the last, but he must have suffered acutely at first. . . . Five fits in the course

[1] January 19.

of the night I watched by him (happily the doctor says these were wholly without conscious sensation, but they were fearful to witness). . . . He leaves me sole executor and residuary legatee; me and yourself the only trustees. I hope you will not refuse the trust. I shall sorely need your advice and aid before long. I find a private letter of instructions to myself, written many years ago, and partly referable to circumstances no longer existing, but much of it bearing on the present, relative to personal wishes to be carried out, value of copyright, &c.

The letter here referred to, written in 1864, but before Robert Lytton's engagement, contained the following sentences:—

Marry for esteem and confidence, as well as love, never mind money, marry wisely. But marry! Continue the line—don't let our name perish. Publish with slowness and care. You ought to be the great writer of our age if you take care of your career. If you add politics to it, be indifferent to office but strike for high position. Be very temperate, very conciliatory. Moderate Conservatism is the best policy, but *high-minded* Conservatism. Adieu! God in heaven bless you, my dear, dear son.—Yours now with all affection. And if you read these lines when I am gone hence, perhaps it may be permitted to me to watch over you. Perhaps I may see you as you read these lines, perhaps I may bless you as you fulfil both these wishes of mine, and a noble and long career for yourself. Perhaps, when you too quit this earth, I may be near your parting soul to welcome it to a happier world. Alas, my own many errors rise before me. And I can only pray that I may be judged not in strict justice, but according to the ineffable mercy which the necessities of our imperfect humanity ascribe to the tender Father, as among his ineffable divine perfections.

On the 20th of January Robert Lytton wrote again to Forster:—

Your letter received to-night, dear friend, is a great comfort to me. You can understand my bewilderment. I find myself in an unknown world without a clue. You know that I was never initiated into the pecuniary affairs of my dear father, and now I have to learn them all suddenly. . . . The will appears to me a singularly just one to all, and a very generous one to myself. . . . Do I surprise you by entering into these details? The necessity of attending to them is, I believe, the only thing that saves me at this moment from utter collapse under the hourly shock of the most violent and conflicting emotions. Each hour brings forth some overwhelming discovery either of the nobleness, tenderness, generosity, and exquisite beauty of my dear father's peerless nature, or else of some almost intolerably painful explanation of oppressive mysteries in the old, old Past, under the shadow of which my whole life has darkly laboured, a shadow which rests for ever on the grave of my poor sister.

I thank you deeply for sending my sad news to the *Observer*, and the *Observer* to me. Its notice does not satisfy me. But perhaps nothing would. When the cants and prejudices of the time have passed with it away, perhaps the children of those whose faint praise and grudging welcome embittered so much of his life will recognise, in what his genius has bequeathed to his country, all that his country owes to it. If so, they will cherish his memory as that of one of the noblest representatives of the noblest and highest types of England's greatest men, and certainly her greatest writer since Scott. . . . But oh, to me, my dear old friend, the heavy human loss! . . . There is no one left in the world except yourself, my second father and brother-friend, to advise, to warn, to scold, and comfort me.

To his chief's wife at Vienna, Lady Buchanan, he wrote :[1]—

He was to me more than a father to a son. . . . the strongest, wisest, truest friend, and we were bound together by many peculiarities. Ties woven out of very bitter circumstances in which affection had yet learnt to find much sweet and tender consolation. This is the first great trouble of my life which finds me without my "ever present help in trouble." For his own dear sake, however, I could wish no happier or worthier ceasing from trouble. He has died as I believe he has ever wished to die, in the midmost of his life's long labours, in the fulness of his faculties and his fame—with no lengthened suffering or even any conscious farewell. Nor did he need preparation for departure. All that was best and loveliest in his character had long been mellowed by time from impulse into habit; and of late his thoughts dwelt chiefly on the light of that life beyond this life where I doubt not he is now—

"Titanically infantine
Laid at the breast of the Divine."

No one can read through Robert Lytton's private letters with reference to his family history without being convinced that whatever the faults or failing of his father's character, they were intimately known to his son. Few, perhaps, had suffered from them more than he; they had gone far to poison and embitter his childhood and youth, and even to cast an occasional shadow upon his maturer manhood, yet at his death his only feeling was that of poignant and profound grief, and the language of his letters about this event are the true and unexaggerated expression of what he then suffered. At a later date, in his biography of his father he writes: "His virtues were those of a good, his

[1] February 14, 1873.

faults those of a great man." This was his deliberate and unswerving judgment, and whilst the faithful devotion of his entire life speaks volumes for the generosity and nobleness of his own character, it at the same time refutes convincingly the aspersions of those who have sought to paint only the darker side of the character which he so loyally vindicated. Neither intimacy nor time could dim the ardent admiration and veneration which the son bestowed upon his father, and any resemblance in himself to that parent was fostered with pride. Even the general fashion of his clothes was a symptom of affectionate imitation. He always wore his trousers wide at the feet, a fashion which did not belong to his generation, and his boots with narrow square tips. A friend once smilingly commented upon this peculiarity. "They are like my father's," was the answer, made in a tone which silenced all further comment. Any word of criticism or disparagement of the novelist in the public press pained and distressed his son as no criticism of his own work could do, just as any discriminating appreciation of the elder Lytton gave his son far keener pleasure than he could have felt at any personal praise bestowed upon himself.

So much for the verdict of the son. That of perhaps Lord Lytton's most intimate and oldest friend was not less favourable. "Thank God I have ever known and valued your father," wrote[1] John Forster some time before his death, "as the highest, not only in intellect, but in all things, and never in the long course of our lifelong intimacy have I found him other than the very highest and noblest and truest under every test and trial." This is the language of partiality from one who to his faults was "a little blind," and to his virtues "very

[1] April 1869.

kind," but it is no bad testimony to a man's character when those who know him best love him most. Of those who knew him only as a public man no one spoke with more generous and appreciative regard of Lord Lytton after his death than Mr. Gladstone, then Prime Minister of England.

Directions had been left in the will for a private funeral at Knebworth, but his son thought himself justified in overriding this personal desire when it was proposed to pay him the national honour of burial in Westminster Abbey, a tribute to his memory which he could not, of course, have anticipated.

The Parisians was published by Blackwood in novel form with the author's name, and *Kenelm Chillingly*. Three thousand one hundred and fifty copies of the last of these two works were sold on the day of its publication.

Robert Lytton had now to consider whether he would immediately retire from his profession, or wait till he had earned from the attainment of higher posts a larger retiring pension. When legacies and succession duties were paid, the fortune which remained was not a large one for a married man with a growing family and an estate to keep up. His inclination was to retire at once and devote the rest of his life to literature, but the argument of prudence seemed to weigh in the direction of wearing his official harness for a while longer. He writes to Mr. Morley:[1] "I stick to my trade for the present. It gives me breathing time, and a temporary escape from the Scylla and Charybdis, between which, before I leave England, I shall take my seat on the cross benches. I wish I could fit my collar to either party, but I was not broken in young enough."

[1] June 1873.

In April he joined his new post as Secretary of Embassy at Paris, where Lord Lyons was Ambassador.

Every month brought forth changes in the then unsettled condition of the Government of France.

At the time when he joined his post M. Thiers was President; M. Grévy had just resigned his seat as President of the Assembly, and had been succeeded by M. Buffet, who was not the man desired by Thiers. Lord Lytton thus described his first visit to the Elysée :—

To JOHN FORSTER. *April* 10, 1873.

MY DEAREST F.,—I shall finish to-day by giving you a report of our first evening at the Elysée, which has finished me.

During the time I was here as *attaché*, that is to say, from '53 to '56, this pretty little palace was never used, so that to-night was the first time I ever set foot inside of it. It would seem the fate of the Elysée to be reserved for the ever recurring *provisorium* in French politics. Louis Napoleon occupied it as President, and no doubt old Thiers experiences the satisfaction which accompanies historic justice in doing the same, since the Whirilgig of Time has now brought round its revenge. Hitherto the fact of finding myself in a palace has inspired me with the most democratic sentiments, but then being in a palace involved being in the presence of royalty. To-night the aspect of this palace had certainly a contrary effect on me, and I contemplated all my neighbours *du haut de ma grandeur de Gentleman Anglais*. For a scrubbier, drearier, more ignoble set of male and female odds and ends were never, I think, gathered together in closer contact or more glaring contrast with the relics of departed grandeur. There were the old Empire tapestries and furniture, all marked with the

bees, and thunderbolts, and N.'s uneffaced, and squatted upon one of these imperial instruments of torture, a sofa as old-fashioned and inconvenient as her husband's commercial policy, there was Madame Thiers, fatly purring asleep. To her I was first presented, and in the hopes of giving her time to awake I turned my talk in the style of St. Paul, which English Greek scholars tell me is a very courtly as well as intellectual style. I crammed my sentences with parentheses each a yard long, in order to make them last. But I only succeeded in putting her into deeper slumber. Then I tried the effect of silence, which gradually awoke her. She lifted a drowsy eyelid, like the Nibelungen dragon, jerked her tail, and mumbled an excuse for the rooms being insufficiently heated, plaintively explaining that there had not been time to put calorifers in the house. In point of fact, however, the temperature of the rooms was that of a baker's oven. Then I was re-presented to Thiers, whom I had known before. He is furious with Grévy, whose resignation Madame Thiers called a *mauvais tour*. We talked about Spanish affairs. I asked him what he thought of the chances of the Carlists. This I did because the old rascal has been complaining to Bismarck of the assistance rendered (he says) by England to Don Carlos. He replied, "I can only say what Fontenelle said of ghosts, 'Je ne crois pas au revenants, mais pourtant je les crains.'" This was the only *mot* I heard this evening at a gathering of notables whose dulness would have disgraced even a London drum.

I was going to say that the rooms were full of men, but in fact they were not full at all. With the exception, however, of Madame Thiers and her sister, a thin repetition of herself, the only women present were my unfortunate Edith (with a bad headache) and a lively, affected little Princess Dolgorouky (Russian), who luckily for me is an old acquaintance of mine. I sprang at her as a new-born babe springs from the strangeness of the world it has just entered to its mother's breast, or as a

bull-dog springs at the throat of its victim—and I should have stuck to her with bull-dog tenacity if Lyons had not carried me off to introduce me to Léon Say—the Finance Minister, . . . who plunged at once into a technical harangue to me on the English Sugar Duties —a subject about which I need not assure you I am profoundly ignorant. I thought it prudent to assent to everything he said. But he seemed to expect me to argue each point with him, and looked disappointed each time I said *Oui*.

On the 11th of April he writes again to Forster:—

Paris is certainly changed in aspect more than I first thought. Since we have been here I have not seen a smart carriage, a handsome horse, or a well-dressed woman in the streets. Yesterday I drove with Edith to the Bois. It was full of fiacres, one-horse shays, and *petits bourgeois* with their wives and families. The Cyprians and Cupids of the Empire have disappeared. The town has grown dull, dowdy, and quasi-respectable—looks like a battered and tired old dandy in reduced circumstances, with all the shine taken out of him. Prices, however, seem to be almost as high as ever. I am told that the War indemnity is not yet seriously felt; that there is really an immense deal of wealth in the country, and that the generality of people are well off. All the shopkeepers express the most vindictive feelings against the Commune. The tone in which the French people talk of themselves is really astonishing—in the third person, as if they were impartial or rather contemptuous spectators of their own follies—

"Voyez-vous Monsieur; le peuple Français est un gros enfant—qui n'a pas le sens commun. Les Français ne savent pas se gouverner—ça aime du tapage—c'est un peuple inconséquent qui n'est jamais sérieux. Croyez moi, Monsieur, ce qu'il faut à ce pays c'est un bon despotisme."

This is the sort of self-criticism you hear on all sides round. A workman said to me yesterday, "L'ouvrier c'est de la canaille." Shopkeepers say, "Le fait est Monsieur que la Bourgeoisie est poltronne."

These good people never appear to reflect that it is themselves they are criticising. The general feeling of all classes in Paris seems to be, "Oh, that the gods would send us some clever not over scrupulous master, to keep us from getting into mischief and breaking our own windows." Political parties are numerous and irreconcilable. No one of them is sufficiently strong to make itself master of the others without violence, and no one of them is satisfied with the prolongation *ad infinitum* of a political armistice maintained by general *impuissance* rather than by general satisfaction. Consequently each party is playing a waiting game, and each party thinks it has something to gain by the "row" which all parties expect whenever the present Assembly is dissolved. "We can make no tricks this deal; let us shuffle the cards again." That appears to be the animating sentiment of each player.

At this time Lord Lytton considered that a moderate Republic in France was a dream. The Conservatives, split up into Imperialists, Legitimists, and moderate Republicans, were too divided to agree upon a course of action, and the Radicals for the most part desired "in a less or greater degree the subversion of the whole social and political fabric, these for the sake of power, and those for the sake of pillage." A military dictatorship seemed to him the most probable solution of such a political tangle, and he saw in MacMahon a man who could undertake such an office. "MacMahon has no personal ambition, and no strong political leaning; he dislikes the labours of Civil Government, and is probably not very fit for them. He can rely upon the army to obey him, and any regular Government, republican

or monarchical, can rely upon him to obey it. . . . There is at present an absolute panic on the part of all who have anything to lose. Many persons are sending their money and effects out of the country, and nobody breathes freely."[1]

On the 24th of May the Government was defeated, Thiers resigned, and Marshal MacMahon accepted the Presidency of the Republic.

Of the Comte de Chambord Lord Lytton wrote, "It is easy for a man to drape himself in a toga of classic virtue and look extremely dignified so long as he keeps *still*. But if he is not trained to walking in a toga, the moment he begins to move he is embarrassed by the folds of his drapery and loses dignity. . . ."

"I cannot lament the fall of Thiers, which he richly deserved, and which I fully expected, because when a man dances on a tight-rope he is generally sure to lose his balance if driven to either of the unelastic extremities of it. So far as English interests were concerned in his fate, Thiers has been behaving to us abominably. Beust[2] professes great sympathy with Thiers 'because,' he says, 'Thiers' fate is the same as my own—I saved Austria, as he saved France, and both of us have become the victims of ingratitude.'"[3]

He made the acquaintance this autumn of M. Guizot, and was agreeably surprised and impressed by him.

To John Forster.

I had expected a stiff, cold, formal man, and found a delightful old gentleman full of wit and anecdote, great sweetness of manner, and flow of conversation, and a certain dignified cordiality that greatly charmed

[1] To Mr. Layard, May 13, 1873.
[2] Austrian Minister.
[3] To Lady Buchanan, May 29.

me. Our talk was chiefly of the Protestant synod and the religious question generally, but he interspersed it with many amusing anecdotes about men and things, and there was something in the noble modesty and simplicity of the old man's establishment and apparent mode of life that impressed me very favourably. The present Government offered him the other day the Embassy in London, which he refused.

M. Guizot died in September 1874, a little less than a year from the date of this letter.

The trial of Marshal Bazaine, over which the Duc d'Aumale presided, had been in progress since the the 6th of October at Versailles. It was there that the prisoner had been born, and there, after a career of military distinction, he awaited the sentence of treason and disgrace.

On the 10th of December, after the counsel of defence had been heard, the Duke asked if the Marshal had anything to say. After a profound silence he rose and said, "I bear on my breast two words, 'Honour' and 'Country.' They have been my motto for the forty years during which I have served France, alike at Metz and elsewhere. I swear it before Christ."[1] The sentence of death, with military degradation, was then pronounced, but at the same time commuted to twenty years' seclusion. The marshal was taken to the State prison on the Isle Ste. Marguerite, whence he escaped in the following year.

LORD LYTTON *to* JOHN FORSTER. *December* 1873.

The news (of the sentence) created much excitement in Paris at five o'clock this morning. The result was fully anticipated by all who watched the trial. The

[1] *Annual Register*, 1873.

military code is not only very severe but very explicit on the counts under which he was tried, and by the terms of the code it was clear from the first that Bazaine was guilty of the capital offence of capitulating *en rase campagne.* But I am bound to say, though clearly establishing his guilt from the military and professional point of view, the trial has established against him no charges of *treason,* in the general and common sense of the word. Madme. MacMahon told me a few days ago that if the wretched man were condemned her husband, the President, would certainly *gracier* him and remit the penalty of death. But every one here says that a marshal of France cannot survive military degradation, and that Bazaine, if a man of honour, is now bound to blow out his brains, or whatever substitute for brains he may have.

In another letter he says of Bazaine, "In point of professional ability, however, I doubt if any of his fellow-marshals were a bit better than he. And if MacMahon had not had the singular good luck to be wounded at Sedan, and thus deprived of the opportunity of losing any more battles, his friends would have found it difficult to make a hero of him."[1]

To Lady Buchanan. *Paris, January* 3, 1874.

My days and the employment of them are all broken to pieces; and I feel much like the Frenchwoman who left her house, which was within sound of a church clock that struck the quarters as well as the hours, because she said, "Cela me coupe la vie en trop de morceaux." Certainly, however, the morsels of Paris life "glitter as they pass," and I think this is the only city in which social intercourse is studied as one of the

[1] To J. Forster, December 16.

arts of life. Like the late Lord W., who grudged his daughter's cab hire, yet did the handsomest things with his money now and then, most clever Englishmen are chary of spending their wits, as the greatest millionaires are the most miserly. They hoard up their cleverness for great occasions—the book they are going to write, or the speech they are going to speak. But the cleverest Frenchmen have all their cleverness in small change, and spend it lavishly on little things. I thought Thiers odious to do business with, for he was dictatorial as well as untrustworthy and full of prejudice. But now that he is out of office, and my only intercourse with him is purely social, I must own that I find him extremely agreeable, so light in hand, so witty, and in very small things so very wise. What a pity that the innumerable small clevernesses with which France abounds cannot be lumped together and capitalised into one great capacity. What France wants just now is an energetic *conservative* reformer—what she had in Thiers was a restless *routinier*, more or less revolutionary.[1] What chiefly strikes me in French society is the brightness of the women. They seem to have brought small talk to perfection; and I think that if a shorthand writer were to take down the most ordinary and frivolous conversation of any half-dozen ordinary Frenchwomen in any of the fashionable salons here, that conversation would be not only readable but almost brilliant. . . .

I went on New-Year's Day to MacMahon's reception at Versailles—a very dull one. What a change since all the Cabinets in Europe used to await in fear and trembling the annual oracle of the Tuileries to know whether the Temple of Janus was to be shut or open

[1] To Lord Salisbury, January 4, 1878, writing of the death of Thiers, he says, "What a curious anomaly he was! He possessed in an eminent degree all the essential qualifications of a statesman—great knowledge, great culture, great courage and fearlessness of responsibility, great *finesse*, and great patriotism; yet with all these qualities he was not a statesman, and never could have become a statesman, even had he lived as many centuries as he intended to live."

for the rest of the year. Apropos of that temple, it is thought here that Bismarck wants to pick another quarrel with France if possible before the death of Kaiser Wilhelm—so as to engage the new Emperor in a policy which will necessitate his dependence on the old minister.

Madme. MacMahon told us the other day that £100 a year is all that Bazaine and his wife have between them to live upon.

In January of this year, 1874, the two volumes of *Fables and Song* were published by Blackwood, and by April he had ready for the press a collection of his father's speeches, with a prefatory Memoir of his political life. He also translated a posthumous essay on the "Genius of Conservatism" for the *Revue des deux Mondes*, because he wanted "the French to read it."

To JOHN FORSTER. *Versailles, October* 16, 1874.

MY DEAREST F.,—. . . I forgot to tell you that the other day I was on the point of leaving the profession even sooner than you would have wished, and making my exit from this life at the same time. I was paying some visits, fortunately alone, in my brougham. The horse took fright, bolted, kicked the splashboard to pieces, and threw the coachman from his box. For a few moments I believed I should myself have been smashed to pieces, when the brute was fortunately stopped by a *gendarme* aided by the coachman, who meanwhile had picked himself up, and behaved very pluckily. This took place in the Rue de l'Elysée. The Duc and Duchesse de Montebello, who were luckily passing at the time, stopped their carriage, and the ruins of mine were at their suggestion taken into the coach-house of the duke's mother-in-law, who lives in that street. I had not a scratch and was not even shaken. The horse is not seriously injured, nor the coachman either, though

he has an ugly-looking cut across his temples. But it was a narrow escape.

However, this true story is not half so pathetic as one which I heard the other day of some poor little white mice. It is so touching that I must tell it you. An old man who exhibited a box full of white mice on the boulevards here (most intelligent little creatures who climb poles, draw little cardboard carriages, leap through paper hoops, &c.), was crossing the Boulevard des Italiens late the other night, with his little performers (who had gone to bed for the night) safe in their box under his arm. One of those great steam-rollers was passing along the boulevard—panting, grunting, scattering sparks and smoke, and looking like Beelzebub's state coach. The poor old beggar had not noticed it till it was nearly on him. In his terror he made a dash out of the way—saved himself, but dropped his white mice. The huge roller rolled on—Crack! and good-bye mice. Three hours later, about two in the morning, some one who had witnessed this tragedy, returning from his club passed the spot again on his way home, and found the old man still there—leaning against a lamp-post and weeping bitterly for his white mice.

You see I write this from Versailles. I have been so overworked and jaded by overwork these last ten days that I could stand it no longer, and have run down here with Edith for a couple of days' rest. . . . Bismarck is just now playing with this unhappy country as a cat plays with a mouse before eating it—the same craft, the same cruelty. I don't think he has any definite intention of immediate war, but it is clear to me that he is resolved to keep some question immediately affecting France in such a disturbed and irritating condition as will furnish him at any moment, should he require it, with a pretext for war, and if possible force the initiative of the quarrel upon France by galling her beyond all endurance. I am so convinced of this that I pass my days in telling the French Government that their only chance of safety is

to disarm that policy by refusing to be provoked, and bearing *anything* rather than take offence. I am bound to say that they seem sufficiently alive to their position, and fortunately Decazes is a man of good temper who is resolved not to lose his temper, and take things easily.

My personal impressions of the situation may perhaps seem to you biassed. But I find them confirmed by Odo Russell, who has the opportunity of studying it from Berlin. Layard thinks that Bismarck is fishing in the troubled waters of Spain for the Philippines, and so does Decazes. I don't feel sure about that, but one thing is certain. Spain is being gradually entangled into *financial* obligations to Germany which it may some day be found easy and convenient to liquidate by accession of colonial territory. M. Bercier, the great Protestant preacher of Paris, who is in correspondence with Countess Arnim, tells me he has heard from her that Arnim, during the first days of his imprisonment, was not allowed a mattress or counterpane to his bed (he is suffering from diabetes), and Emily Russell writes to Edith that the hospital to which Arnim has now been removed is exclusively for servants and prostitutes! No doubt, however, the Press in England and throughout Europe will some time longer continue to find that everything done by Bismarck is excellent—partly because the average public mind, always in extremes, has in it no sense of proportion or capacity of discrimination, it records all its impressions in black or white, and when it has ceased to regard any eminent man as the devil, it adores him as God Almighty, and cannot arrest the impetus of its own reaction (I have tried to indicate this common tendency in my fable of an old couple); but more especially is this accounted for by the fact that Bismarck has in his hands an all-powerful engine for dealing with the Press everywhere. As you doubtless know, the confiscated revenues of Hanover have been appropriated by the Berlin Government as a fund for

manipulating the Press in foreign countries—which is appropriately called by the Berlin Government the Reptile Fund.

In the *Contemporary Review* of November 1874 he published an article on the French constitutional monarchy of 1830 and the causes of its failure.

Lord Lytton was now able for the first time to keep a carriage and horses, and entertain more freely than had hitherto been possible. Social life had at times great charm for him, but the weariness of it after a short spell invariably predominated over every other feeling.

Their Paris apartment was in the Faubourg St. Germain, *entre cour et jardin*, a whole hotel minus the *rez-de-chaussée*, which was occupied by an acquaintance; the rooms were handsomely furnished, and the accommodation well suited to their needs.

He accompanied his wife on her first visit to the famous dressmaker, Worth, who greeted him, to his surprise, as the son of his benefactor. "On hearing who I was he rushed up to me, and after an infinite number of compliments and fine speeches, said that he owed everything in life to my father. 'As how?' I asked. Whilst yet a youth struggling with fortune he had read *Night and Morning*. That book had made a profound impression on him, had awakened his genius, aroused his courage, kindled his hopes, directed his aims, &c. His eldest son was Christened Philip after the hero. There's fame for you. I ventured to express the hope that *Night and Morning* would have a very favourable effect on Mr. Worth's bill."[1]

In the summer they were able to spend their holiday at Knebworth, whither for the first time

[1] To John Forster, November 8, 1873.

they were free to welcome their own chosen friends, chief amongst whom were John Forster, M. de Villers, and John Morley.

Mr. Morley had recently published his two volumes on Jean Jacques Rousseau, which his friend greatly admired. "Your chapter on Rousseau and Voltaire," he writes,[1] "is, I think, one of the finest and soundest pieces of criticism I ever read." In the character of Rousseau Mr. Morley had detected and revealed "that constant sense of the heroic and the ideal in human life which, in spite of the man's nastiness and odiousness, has given to him an influence upon the world so much more elevating and even more practical than that of Voltaire, in whom this sense was entirely wanting."

A month later the news reached him that Mr. Morley was thinking of standing for a Parliamentary election. Robert Lytton was never "a party man," in the English sense, and his friends were for the most part in those days non-political, or not English. "The only party I could willingly join," he writes, "is a party which does not exist—a National Honour Party." But the deep interest he took in Mr. Morley's career made him anxious to see him in the House, not so much for the sake of his influence in Parliament as for the influence of Parliament on him. "With your naturally robust practicableness and strong civic sense, what valuable personal experience might you not acquire from that parliamentary life which is so profitless to others? The publicist who never condescends to be a politician is in danger of becoming a *doctrinaire*."

M. de Villers came from Germany to visit them. Lytton met him in London, and showed him some of the sights of the town.

[1] June 18, 1873.

To his Wife. July 8, 1873.

What a day! Awoke at five, and could not sleep afterwards. Walked in the park with Villers before breakfast. After breakfast business, then International Exhibition, National Gallery, then the Tower, then Westminster Abbey, and visit to Madame Mohl in the Deanery. Then the two Houses of Parliament, then dinner at the Garrick, and walk home. Forster and Lady Sherborne benevolently tyrannical and jealous of each other. Villers angelically submissive, I sulkily so—general result, excessive fatigue. Your dear letter just received has been the greatest joy of all my day, and my greatest comfort is to think that my own miserable inability to enjoy as they deserve all the blessings God has given me, leaves me still able to contribute to the happiness of one who is dearer to me than anything in the life which for her dear sake I would wish to make wiser and happier. Shall we ever be dwellers in some untroubled tract of time? Contentment is perhaps a flying island, never to be reached, at least by such ill-conditioned spirits as my own.

Forster spent some happy days with them at Knebworth, and on the eve of his return to Paris and his official life Lord Lytton wrote to him:[1]—

The little heart I have left seems half broken after dipping every ten minutes of this rainy afternoon in the special emptiness of that oak drawing-room now, for ever, especially yours, and wandering about the whole house like an unlaid ghost, seeking what I cannot find, 'the touch of a vanished hand, and the sound of a voice' that is in London. Life seems suddenly and inexpressibly weary, flat, stale, and unprofitable, this first of so many days to be passed without the help and comfort of your dear presence. But I suppose one must "jog on, jog on the footpath way," even when one cannot "merrily lilt

[1] September 1873.

the stile O!" No, nor ever know or guess where the foot-path way may lead to. . . . We sat to-night in the library, not the gallery, after dinner; the gallery would have been too sad. My dear friend, it is quite clear to me that I am not made for the life I am trying to lead. To live in the country, write verses, love my friends, and do harm to no man, "no, nor woman either, though by your smiling you seem to think so"—this is all I am fit for. When a steam-engine gets off the rails, you hear of a catastrophe. When a human being gets off the right rail of life, what happens? If in the items of news from Paris you hear of 'battle murder and sudden death' by an English Secretary of Embassy, be not surprised. Meanwhile, "a night of memories and sighs I dedicate to thee."—Your loving R.

Winter weather, ill health, and the grind of an uncongenial life, growing daily more irksome, all combined to bring about one of those waves of constitutional depression from which, in spite of a buoyant nature, he was never long free. The doctors again urged him to give up smoking, but the attempt to conquer this habit made the "burden of being more intolerable than ever." As the anniversary of his father's death came round he escaped from Paris for a while and went to Fontainebleau, where he spent his days riding through the magnificent forest and longing for the freedom of a retired country life.

After his return to Paris their nursery was attacked by a malignant cold.

"One after the other" (he writes) "it seized our little ones. The second daughter, Conny, was the first; for many days she has been in her little bed, suffering cruelly, and still no less cruelly suffering, first on the chest, then in the ear (my father's ear!), acute pain. . . . Great

pain, too, in the head, and oh such a change in the little face! My anxiety is great and increasing."

Little Teddy, now a child of nearly two years old, was the last to take the cold, but not, it at first appeared, seriously. The anxiety of the parents was all for his sister, when suddenly he was seized with croup, both lungs rapidly congested, all remedies failed, and in a few hours he was dead.

"Our boy, our only one, our little Teddy has been taken from us. Last night we were not alarmed, this afternoon we lost him. A terrible time to us has been this last week, and the terror of it is still in our home, sore anxiety not ceasing in that grief which has no hope for the morrow."

So wrote the father[1] on the day of the child's death to the dear friend of his own childhood, and a few days later—

"In a day or two I shall be bringing my boy's body to be buried at Knebworth. I shall probably come alone. The mother must not leave our two only ones in their present state. Edith is overwhelmed; her cry cuts me to the heart. We are all broken, worn out, stunned. I can write no more."

To work, as ever, he turned for consolation. "Je travaille avec rage," he writes to Villers, "comme un homme qui se sent poursuivi et qui fouette le cheval qu'un ami lui a prêté, galopant pour la vie." That is man's instinct, to fly from sorrow, sternly fixing the mind on some external occupation to divert thought from a channel where madness seems to lie. Woman's way is otherwise; she does not drive grief from her, but hugs it close, till it grows

[1] To John Forster, March 1, 1874.

familiar and thereby less terrifying. Robert Lytton knew at this time that he and his wife differed in this respect, and that, in so far as he could find in work "a realm of consolation" and she could not, her sorrow was the livelier and the deeper of the two. He also felt that the loss of such little ones was to the mother the loss of her *to-day*, to the father only the loss of his *to-morrow*. To him the child life of his little son spelt the future, to her the present.

Out of the talks held with Villers at Vienna over the Fables had sprung the idea of a long fantastic poem, belonging to the same vein of fancy, but more ambitious in its character, a fairy tale which might prove to be the vehicle of "homely pathos" and "good-humoured satire." This was the genesis of *King Poppy*. While at Paris the idea ripened, and during the period of social freedom secured to him by his bereavement the poem was first committed to paper. Daily letters about it passed between Vienna and Paris. Canto by canto it was subjected to Villers' suggestions and criticism, and the thoughts of the poem are a blend of the two minds, bearing the stamp of a dual personality, though not one word of the verse could be written by the German poet.

After a week's absence from wife and children, and a longer silence than usual from Villers, Lytton writes to him, "Pour huit jours que j'ai passé seul à Paris il y avait deux choses qui me manquaient. *Phantasos*[1] et la famille. L'idéal et l'habitude, Phantasos et la Famille sont arrivés ensemble le même jour. À la bonne heure! Hip! hip! hoorah! . . . Grand jour de fête!!!!!! Voila les feux d'artifice et les cris de joie. Il faut aussi des larmes pour être bien en règle. Les voici donc . . . iiiiii

[1] One of the characters in the poem—The God of Dreams.

In a letter to Morley he once wrote,[1] "The commonest element of human life is its need in one way or another of consolation for the facts of it in the sentiment of some emotional ideal!" This phrase may be taken as the key-note to *King Poppy*. The work expressed what to him was the aim, purpose, and power of poetry in human life. Joy and love, lost to life's actual surroundings, could in poetry be recovered. In the Poppy's kingdom of dreams (dreams not so much in respect of their unreality as of their ideality, and security from chance and change) famished hearts could be feasted, ruined fortunes rebuilt, pain be stilled, grief be comforted—

> "O mightiest of monarchs and most mild,
> Whose kingdom is the fairest upon earth,
> The fairest and the freest! Reign for ever
> Fate's Master, yet man's ministering friend!"

The poem, begun in 1874, was the companion of all his future wanderings, the receptacle of every mood of thought and feeling, the work on which he bestowed the most patient, the most prolonged, the most loving labour for nearly twenty years—and I am thankful to say he died before his belief in its merit, and his pride in it as the best outcome of his poetic faculty received the check and disappointment which the result of its publication would have brought about had he lived to know it. For neither did this work possess "the popular element."[2]

[1] June 1873.

[2] The leading conception of the poem is best described in a letter to his sister-in-law, Mrs. Earle, written in 1880:—

"The purpose of *King Poppy*, so far as it has a definite purpose, is not to prove that all is vanity, but to suggest what a poor tissue of unreality human life would be if the much-despised influence of the imagination were banished from it. I think that the practical tendency of all the most popular formulas of social and political improvement is to exclude the imaginative element from the development of character and society, and to ignore its influence. Certainly the tendency of all

In the summer of 1874 Lord Lytton spoke at the Mechanics' Institute at Leeds. This was the first time he had publicly appeared before an English audience. The anticipation of the occasion made him almost ill from nervousness, but his speech

political thought and action in my own time has been to reduce Government (the one field of human activity which more perhaps than any other requires individual character, courage, imagination, and insight) to the merest machine, worked automatically. To my view this machine is a very clumsy and useless one. It cannot even turn out a decent Sewage Bill; or satisfactorily perform the most ordinary legislative or administrative function. It seems to me that in all our attempts to render our institutions more practical, we have brought all the practical functions of Government virtually to a deadlock, whilst an immense amount of force and time is annually wasted in talking pure clap-trap, and the man who is most master of the miserable trick of clap-trap becomes the popular idol of the hour. Yet to this result (a wretched one as I see it) all our reforms have conduced, and to it all our political philosophy and all our intellectual formulas have tended. Take the whole body of pure political philosophy which has most influenced political action for the last fifty years, from Bentham to Mill. Is it not all in this direction? Take the whole modern school of historical science. The great discovery it professes to have made is that individual character has no appreciable effect upon social development—that the progress of the world is shaped by the mechanism of great social forces, not having their source in great individualities, and that the movement of these is to be calculated by the doctrine of averages, without any reference to the disturbing influence of particular sovereigns, statesmen, and soldiers, &c. Buckle was the first and most brilliant exponent of this Philosophy of History, in England at least; for in essentials he was anticipated by Comte, and you have the last most popular embodiment of it in Mr. Green's *History of England*. I am persuaded that it is all radically wrong and rotten, and that political action influenced by these theories can never produce anything but Dead Sea fruit, dust, and ashes. Holding these views, which make me feel isolated and out of harmony with my age, it was a relief to me to write *King Poppy*, and a sort of whimsical enjoyment to contemplate my own image of the perfection of Government mechanism conducted by a puppet. Apart from this, the more purely literary idea I had in this poem was to shape out vaguely a sort of golden legend from the most venerable and familiar features of fragments of the fairy tales and ballads which float about the world, and which our wise generation relegates to the nursery. The Sleeping Princess—the Enchanted Palace—the Flying Horse—Gammer Gurton—the old King and the young Shepherd who are the stock characters of the genuine fairy tale, and then the good Fairy or tutelary genius of this impossible little world, who directs the destiny of its more favoured inhabitants. But if I dotted all my 'i's' and crossed all my 't's,' what would become of Phantasos? Enough of this pedantic attempt to tell you what I meant the poem to tell for itself indirectly in its own way."

was so enthusiastically received that the experience was not wholly unpleasant. He stayed with Lord Ripon, and at this house met Sir William Harcourt, whose first wife was cousin to Lady Lytton. He was impressed with the intelligence of the British artisan, which he then for the first time had occasion to appreciate, and not less impressed with the cynical light-heartedness revealed in the conversation of those whom he had hitherto looked upon as serious English politicians. The time previous to the meeting was spent in ridiculing the fine things they intended to utter from the platform, after the meeting in laughing still more heartily at the fine things that *had* been uttered!

In the autumn of 1874 he visited the Duc d'Aumale at Chantilly, where the Orleanist princes were gathered to help to entertain our Prince of Wales. Lord Lytton had not visited the *château* since Lord Cowley tenanted it in the palmy days of the Empire, when the Orleans family were in exile and their property confiscated.

To JOHN FORSTER. *October* 1874.

After dinner I went with the Prince of Wales and Duc d'Aumale and Chartres to smoke in the billiard-room. I had a long talk with the Duc d'Aumale, and was much impressed by his general culture and clear intelligence. I had also a good deal of talk with the Prince of Wales, who remonstrated with me about a rumour, which he said had reached him, of my intention to resign; said that I am sure of some very high post before long if I will only wait for it. That the Queen had told him her three best diplomatists were Odo Russell, Lyons, and myself, and added all sorts of flattering things, &c. At about twelve o'clock the Prince went downstairs to play whist (which he did with Count Darn and the Duc

de Chartres till about two in the morning), and I took that opportunity of creeping to bed, being anxious to join the hunt next morning, as a day's hard riding generally cures me of a cold. I had sent down my horse with Wilson overnight, and brought my red coat with me. I passed a bad night, but the morning was bright and fresh. There was a general breakfast at 10 A.M., which we all hastened through in our hunting clothes, and then mounted and started for the *rendezvous de Chasse*, which was in one of the most picturesque parts of the forest. A fine stag was soon put up, who did in the course of the day everything which a French stag ought to do. Swam a lake, puzzled the hounds, killed one, and was finally killed himself at about 3.30 in a thicket. You know how picturesque I think these French stag-hunts. This was considered by connoisseurs a remarkably good one, and was managed by the Duc d'Aumale with great skill. I enjoyed it much, although I rode a pulling horse which absolutely refused to show the slightest deference to all the royalties in the field by keeping decorously behind them. The whole population of the neighbourhood turned out to the rendezvous to see the Prince, and followed on foot through the forest the greater part of the way. H.R.H. and everybody else (self included) were as stiff as pokers for the next three days; but I got rid of my influenza in the Chantilly forest. We had a sharp ride back to the *château*, barely time to change our dress, gobble a hasty luncheon, and catch the 5 P.M. train by which the Prince returned to Paris. The place of honour was given to me in the carriage with Aumale and the Prince, and there was a crowd at the station which cheered the Prince in very good English.

The following day I went with the Prince to breakfast with the President. After breakfast they went to Marly to shoot. I was invited, but excused myself, having a messenger to despatch that day, and because I hate shooting. By the way, I thought the decorations of the breakfast-table so pretty and original that I must describe it for Mrs.

Forster. The entire centre of the table-cloth was covered with green moss, which made the table look like a grass-plot. Into the centre of the artificial grass-plot blush roses were inserted, and the plot itself was surrounded by a thick border of fresh violets, leaving round the edge of the table only small circular spaces (similarly bordered with violets) for the plates and bottles.

The day afterwards I was asked by Baron de Villers and the Princesse de Sagan to meet the Prince at Mello. This place I am really glad to have seen. It was formerly the *château fort* of Chantilly, when both *châteaux* belonged to the Montmorencys; and you may remember perhaps that the great Constable de Montmorency lent Mello to Lord Herbert of Cherbury, who I rather think describes it in his autobiography.

Externally the *château* cannot be much changed since then. It stands surrounded by a moat on a hill, with a magnificent view all round it; is built with pepper-box turrets and walls of immense thickness, and looks rather like a Scotch castle. It is at present furnished with a mixture of splendour and comfort I have never seen equalled in any English country-house; the father of its present owner was I believe a great collector, and has fitted it with the most costly works of art, arranged with perfect taste. The finest pictures, and oh, such a collection of rare old books—Caxtons! We were thirty, I think, to dinner, the dinner itself a masterpiece of culinary art, with fruit from the hot-houses of the *château* which made me, as an Englishman, very jealous. Raspberries, strawberries (in October, remember!), and to say nothing of the peaches and grapes, which were uncommonly fine, pine-apples as big as beer-barrels. I sat on one side of our hostess, and the Prince on the other. There was also a very fair show of beauty round the table. There was an excellent band in the music gallery, which played during all the dinner-time the most animating, not to say amative strains; and what with the wine and the music, the company got so jolly

towards the end of the dinner, that I really know not what might have happened in the course of the evening, if the Prince and party had not been obliged to return to Paris before twelve by special train.

On our way back to town I was seized with a vinous inspiration, which resulted in the silent composition of the following fable:—

TOO LATE

In a pond where 'twas pleasant to swim,
Dwelt a carp. No one noticed him there,
But an accident happened to him,
Which to other carps happens elsewhere.

He was caught; and the notice denied
To his life, its extinction attended;
For as soon as the carp had been fried,
All who ate him his flavour commended

O you ladies so lovely and dear,
When a man has attained to the age
Which must soon be arrived at, I fear,
By your servant, and fabulist sage,

All your flattering favour, alas,
Can no longer enkindle his pride;
For the poor wretch is not what he was,
Any more than a carp that is fried.

In November Sir Charles Murray resigned his post of Minister of the Legation at Lisbon, and Lord Derby offered it to Lord Lytton, who at once accepted it. "The salary is £4400, the climate excellent, the work nil, the distance—ah!" But some months in the summer might still be passed at Knebworth, there would be much spare time in the grass-grown city for literature, money would be saved, and freedom follow. He believed it would be his last diplomatic or official post.

The last months at Paris were months of illness. In December he was laid up with an acutely painful attack of inflammation. His wife on the 26th of

that month gave birth to their fifth child, a third daughter, christened Emily after his sister.

Before their pretty Paris apartment was dismantled for their next exodus, they gave a dinner to literary friends, who had been invited to give their opinion of his father's posthumous play of *Darnley*. Villers was there, on one of his rare and happy visits; Alexandre Dumas, Delaunay of the Français, Count and Countess Pourtalès, and Count Louis Turenne, who had translated four acts of the play into French, which he read aloud after dinner.

To J. FORSTER.

The dinner was a pleasant one. Dumas being in great force, and decidedly agreeable, told some amusing anecdotes of his father, for whom he shows a filial veneration which touches me, and is creditable to him. He is witty, talkative, and full of repartee, but he too ostentatiously treats literature as a trade and art as a trick. In his hands it *is* no doubt a trick of which he has made himself master, but that is why his art, in spite of his cleverness, is not only repulsive from its utter lack of elevation, but also, *me judice*, essentially second-rate in an æsthetic point of view. The man is interesting to study, however, as a representative type of the literary tendencies and tastes of the age not only in France, but generally elsewhere. The cultivation of realism, based on the fallacy that realism is truth; the practical subordination of every literary effort and purpose to the satisfaction rather of the public taste and humour than of the internal necessities of one's own genius (a point of view imposed on successful authors by the inevitable character of their relations with the modern public, and which was I think, so far as they felt its influence, injurious both to my father and Dickens); and therewithal a certain coarseness of in-

tellectual fibre which accompanies an author's conviction that literary effect is the result of a mechanical trick, which he has thoroughly mastered; all these "elements of success in literature" Dumas represents in the highest degree, just as Bismarck represents the elements of success in modern politics.

The play, which had been well translated, was badly read, and the verdict of the French dramatist and actor was antagonistic. It would not do for the French stage. The society portion of the audience took up this cue, and reiterated the condemnation. Lord Lytton thereupon gave up all idea of bringing the play out on the French stage. In 1878 it was performed at the Burg Théatre at Vienna, and previously to this it had been produced by Mr. Hare in London. "The play was put upon the stage at the Court Theatre, London, with great splendour as regards scenery and decoration. Mr. Hare, the manager, spared no expense. I am told that the scenery of each act was arranged, not like an ordinary stage scene, but like the interior of some very luxurious private house furnished with great taste as well as wealth, and that Lady Juliet's boudoir alone cost upwards of £1000."[1]

[1] Lytton to Villers, 1878.

CHAPTER XIII

LISBON

1875, AET. 43–44

The springtide of the world is once a year,
But once a life the springtide of the heart;
And when it goes 'tis gone for evermore.
—*King Poppy.*

LORD LYTTON was invited by the Prince of Wales to Sandringham before he quitted England for Lisbon.

A very pleasant and enjoyable country house, where every guest has perfect liberty. I think I never felt more at home in the house of any man not an intimate friend. The plague of most country houses is the daily plan made up by the hosts for the amusement of the guests. Here every one does as he pleases. . . . Our party is entirely a man's party and chiefly a whist party, in which I don't join, as the stakes are high and the playing I believe very good. . . . The amusements are lawn-tennis, walking, and strolling about. Music and whist after dinner, as also American bowls—a game I am very fond of and used once to play well. We only meet our hosts at luncheon, when the children appear, and they are charming. The Princess is looking very pretty and graceful.

On the 13th of May, Lord and Lady Lytton with their three children reached Lisbon.

The Legation was in need of complete repair, and could not be made habitable till November. The hotel where they had rested on arrival was

so hot and noisy and so unclean that they gladly escaped from it to the house of a friend, which was hospitably thrown open to them.

The grant allowed by the Government for putting "the old barn of a Legation" into repair was wholly inadequate for the purpose. The remainder had to be paid out of the Minister's pockets. Nor was this the only expense which at once threatened to eat into those visionary savings which were to enable Lord Lytton to retire from his profession. He had engaged before leaving England a villa at Cintra, belonging to the Duke of Saldanha, on the understanding that it was furnished and ready for occupation, and large enough to hold the entire family with room to spare. On going to see it, however, he found that the furniture consisted of "a dozen cane-bottomed chairs, of which eight were broken, two kitchen-tables, and one broken chest of drawers." To make this house habitable he was compelled to furnish it anew from top to toe. The 160 cases which had come from England to furnish the Legation had to be brought at great expense from the custom-house at Lisbon to Cintra. Moreover, the villa was so small that it was necessary to hire a neighbouring house as well to hold servants and stablemen. "To crown all," he writes, "Saldanha's agent, whom he calls his aide-de-camp, refuses to let me hang a curtain in the house or pick a flower in the garden, and keeps a notoriously ferocious mastiff on the premises, which I rent and pay for, letting the brute loose every night, and training him to fly at everybody's throat." To choose another abode was not possible, for the contract was signed and the whole rent paid in advance.

The Lisbon custom-house charged £60 as the fee for keeping the cases a few weeks, and when they were opened at Cintra most of the valuable things, glass, china, and cabinets were found broken to

pieces. "What can you expect," he winds up in a letter to Morley,[1] "from a wretch who feels as though his belly were full of bits of Dresden china and his mouth full of morsels of Venice glass? Oh, what a life is that of the diplomatic nomad! Bless your lucky stars, you gentlemen of England who live at home at ease. *Qui ubique habitat nusquam habitat.* A man hath no wife if he marries two at a time, no house if he hath more than one. Three are the Devil an' all. I say nothing about Trinity in Unity. But I know there is no Unity in Trinity."

To MRS. JOHN FORSTER. *July* 1875.

Portugal is a country in which everything *goes contrary.* The horses here have their feet shod hind-side foremost; the windows of the houses are numbered instead of the doors; people let off fireworks by day instead of by night; and if you go to a place of public amusement you pay on leaving instead of on entering.

Lord Lytton took some personal part in the work of carpenter and upholsterer, in order to make the ramshackle villa ready to receive the family, who were beginning to suffer from the heats of Lisbon. I remember it now, with its surroundings of glorious vegetation, the hydrangeas, and wild geraniums growing on the sides of the banks, and the delicious hot smell of the fir-trees. For children it was a paradise; for my parents the place had memories that were not without sadness.

To JOHN FORSTER. *June* 14.

As for myself, I view it all with a vaguely comfortless sensation that "I had a vision of my own and why did I undo it?" Return to one's old love is ever perhaps

[1] June 14.

a dubious experiment. The place is wholly unchanged —as beautiful as ever. But after the larger life of Paris and London my first impressions of it now are those of minuteness, forlornness, remoteness, a sense of being lost and left behind somewhere, additionally saddened by revived memories of what has really been lost, our dear Rowland, and the quiet honeymoon life we lived here years ago. Everything here, and at every turn, reminds me of that past. The same trees and the same beggars in the same places. One old blind beggar, whom I find standing in the same spot where I left him eight years ago, I can never pass without wondering what there is in his life to have made the prolongation of it more desirable in the eyes of the "other omniscient" than that of our two bright boys who are gone. But I have happily ceased to doubt that all that is given and taken is for the ultimate best.

Soon, however, the perfect peace and leisure brought a corresponding cheerfulness and much literary activity. "I am slowly relapsing to my natural self, and feel proportionally happier and more at rest than I have felt for many years. I quite dread the thought of any other post." And again—"I have not for years been so wholesomely myself, my true self, and I long for nothing so much as to be left undisturbed for some years longer in the peaceful enjoyment of my present easy post."[1]

King Poppy was laid aside for the time to await publication, and in correspondence with his ever stimulating German friend, Villers, the scheme for another long poem was sketched out, a poem in which what his father called "the popular element" was to be prominently represented. This poem was no other than *Glenaveril*—not finally written till 1884–5.

[1] To John Forster, August 1875.

Letter to MR. JOHN MORLEY. *Cintra, July* 8, 1875.

What are you doing, John Morley, John Morley?
What are you doing in town?
Are you sorely, John Morley, assaulting the Tory
Lawgivers, and smiting them down?
While you list to the chatter of . . . the satyr,
For your sake does he dish up to breakfast a bishop,
Or parson, grown fatter by railing at matter,
With a sinner or two, such as Maxse and you,
And, to garnish the platter, a Turk or a Jew,
Between Moody and Sankey and Swinburne—who'll flavour
The whole with an aphrodisiacal savour
Lascivious and Grecian? Does Lowe the logician,
Whose head is as white as our insular rocks and stern,
Illumine the maxim of Chancellor Oxenstern
By the light of pure reason? Or do you talk treason
With the *Fortnightly* chiefs of the Radical garrison,
Implacable Beesly and high-minded Harrison?
Whose manners are mild as his pen is audacious,
And whose spouse is so pretty, so clever, so gracious,
That were I in his place ('tis a figure of speech, Sir)
I'd wish things to remain as they are. But whatever
Your Editorship is about, I beseech, Sir,
Send me news, send me news of John Morley. For never
Can this "present writer," though now out of reach, Sir,
Be tamely resigned to be quite out of mind.
So deliver—you bold anti-clerical Tamerlane!
Are you still, in unholy alliance with Chamberlain,
Riding fiercely atilt at the rickety steeple
Of that church where Will Gladstone (sublimest of curates!)
Is now shaking hands with all sorts of odd people?
Are you settling the school rates, "reforming" the poor rates?
Or flirting with muggism, never excessive,
Like Kimberley's priggism, mildly progressive?
Or best of all, painting some portrait, perchance,
Which shall gladden our eyes, ere leaves fall in September,
Of the last of last century's worthies in France?
Well, whate'er you be doing, John Morley, remember
That you owe now a letter (and the sooner 'tis written
The better, the better, John Morley!) to Lytton.

By the way, can you tell me if the (Indian) *Máhabhárata* has been translated into English, and if there exists to your knowledge, much or any English litera*toor* about

this book? If Hollyman's version of it be a fair sample, it is a delightful one. I have been looking through Hollyman's four *in-quarto* vols. on the *Máhábhárata*, which he (Hollyman) has arranged and reconstructed after his own fashion, and it has so far fascinated me that I should like to write for the *Fortnightly* an article, or a couple of articles, not on the *Máhábhárata*, but on H.'s most interesting and charming book about it. I could make them lively and amusing to "the general." But if there be, as I suppose there must be, plenty of dull English books, unknown to me, on the same subject, it would not be decent to introduce Hollyman without a preliminary bow to their authors, and in that case I should first have to learn their names, perhaps to look at their books. Let me give you, however, a specimen of what attracts me in Hollyman's book. I abridge:

USINARA

Falcon and Dove

Usinara, the King, was sacrificing on the banks of the Jumna. A dove, pursued by a falcon, fled for refuge to the King's bosom.

The Falcon. Fidelity to duty is the pride of Princes, great King. Why art thou disobedient to her dictates? I am hungry, deprive me not of the food which God hath given me.

The King. This bird hath sought protection in my breast. Dost thou not understand, O Falcon, that the first of princely duties is not to betray the confidence of the helpless.

The Falcon. Food is the condition of life. To surrender any other cherished object, though painful, is possible. But he who takes away my bread takes away my life. You murder me if you save the dove. Nor me only, but all my family, who depend on me for their support. Mistrust, O King, the duty which another duty contradicts. Duty is plain and imperative. But if indeed one duty conflicts with another, must not the primary be preferred to the secondary duty, the greater to the less?

The King. Thou speakest wisely, Great Bird. Art thou Suparn, the King of Birds, who knows all things? But how

can I deliver to thee and to death the life I am bound to protect? Choose, amongst all I possess, what other food thou wilt. Take my bulls, my wild boars, my sheep, my stags, my buffaloes. I give thee all.

The Falcon. Beef and mutton do not agree with me, nor venison, nor buffalo. Pigeon is my natural and proper food. And from all eternity the dove was created for the falcon.

The King. Behold I give to thee all the empire of the Siweens, and whatsoever else thou canst desire—everything except this which hath sought refuge in my bosom.

The Falcon. Monarch of men, if thou so lovest the dove, give me in its place an equal weight of thine own flesh.

The King. The demand is just, I agree.

(Scales are brought. The King cuts off pound after pound of his own flesh, which however is continually outweighed by the scale which contains the dove. At last, when nothing is left on his bones, he seats himself in the balance.)

The Falcon. Usinara, I am Indra, and that dove is the God of Fire. To prove thy virtue we have tried it. True in the trial, *thou hast sacrificed thyself.* Arise now with me into heaven. Thy place in heaven shall endure as long as men continue to speak of thee on earth."

Now perpend. Is not this a noble fable?[1] If weighed in Usinara's balance, must not the Indian falcon outweigh the Boccaccian? Though indeed the latter hath ever been a favourite fowl with me. Here, however, is not only the Christian conception of sacrifice, but the anticipation of Kant's *Categorical Imperative*—in the words, "Thy place shall last in heaven so long as men name thee on earth." The sweet seriousness of the fable excludes all suspicion of irony, which otherwise would be irresistible. I see in it rather a warning to men not to throw away the greatest gift the gods have given them —their capacity of gratitude for noble human example, and a hint that it is the good and the great whom it is in men's interest to remember. There is elsewhere in this book another myth—exceedingly curious—much

[1] This story may be found incorporated in *Glenaveril*, in the fifth book of that poem. It is also told by Renan in his touching volume of *Recollections*.

finer, I think, and certainly more plausible than the Christian myth which it reverses; ascribing the uncomfortable condition of the universe to the original sin—not of a man but of a God. In this conception it is not a God who has expiated once for all the sin of mankind, it is mankind who are still unconsciously expiating the misdeed of a God. But enough of this. Prithee tell me now all about thyself, and something about the world "wherein I move no more." What are the wise men doing in England? Or are they all gone back to the East? Is the Gladstonian twaddle selling the *Contemporary* by its thousands and tens of thousands? What do people say of King Alfred's new play? I need not ask what they write of it. For this I see in all the daily and weekly papers. The Puff Universal. I cannot fancy the possibility of a really *dramatic* conception having issued from the brain of that blameless monarch of the milder muses, and their many worshippers. Not at least dramatic in the sense to which I think that much misused word should be confined. But I daresay his *Queen Mary* is at least more readable than Swinburne's *Bothwell*—a book I had rather praise than read—that is to say, if I needs must choose between the two evils. How stands the Government in what the public is pleased to call its estimation? Some one tells me there is a talk of Dizzy going up aloft, and following his "late espoused saint"—as far as the peerage at least? The Grocers, with whom Lord Derby has been talking, must surely be very *green* grocers if they think that shy bird Peace is to be caught by the sort of salt which civic banquets provide for official orators. But this note of interrogation is getting too long. Adieu! adieu!—*Scribimus ut rescribas.* Your ever affectionate

LYTTON.

Mr. Morley had lately met the Queen of Holland; her name recalled a flood of early recollections.

To MR. JOHN MORLEY. *July* 15.

So you have been chatting with the Queen of Holland, than whom no woman is more fond of chat, and few chat better. She is an immense gossip (very wrong-headed, I think, and wholly without judgment or common sense), but has a lively, bright, active intelligence, very receptive and very spontaneous. She has also a good deal of heart, in a lop-sided way, and the superlative merit of warmth and fidelity in friendship. I used to see a good deal of her, and my recollection of her is a very sympathetic and affectionate one, though I have not seen her lively majesty for many a long year. Strangely enough, she was very closely concerned in a somewhat critical passage of my past—long past—life; a matrimonial engagement between me and a young lady who was (matrimonially) wooed by her son, the Prince of Orange, then a raw youth, commonly called "The unripe Orange." She had a great *schwarm* for my wife's uncle, Lord Clarendon, and has always taken a very friendly interest in the Villiers family. Her other hero was the late French Emperor. *Tempi passati!* All this belongs to a bygone generation already. When I recall my diplomatic experiences and acquaintances, I feel wondrous old. I knew intimately Clay and Webster, and I feel that between them and the American politicians of to-day there is a political century. I knew the old Prince Metternich, and this fact makes me sometimes feel as if I had actually assisted (as an unpaid *attaché*) at the Congress of Vienna. I remember as a boy hearing the old Duke of Wellington talk about Soult and the Peninsular War, whilst warming his venerable *rear* quarters at the fireplace of the great drawing-room at Hatfield House. It is only the other day since I was listening to Guizot's reminiscences of his own youth. How weird it all seems and eerie! How little the longest life counts in the progress of anything, how far

back the shortest life can reach, vicariously, in the retrospect of all things, how fast we grow old, how soon our enthusiasms are quenched, how rapidly the march of the mass passes beyond the point at which each individual member of it halts! During the last week I have been looking over and sorting old letters from my father to myself, with the object of selecting from them those which may be available as materials for his biography. Oh dear, oh dear, what ghosts these old letters evoke! I have carefully kept every letter he ever wrote to me. When I now re-read those which I received from him while I was yet a boy at Harrow, I wince at his reproofs, blush at his reprovals, as though I were still fourteen, with a vague, ghostly consciousness of having in some quite other planet passed beyond the age of forty. And amongst those old letters I now and then come across old verses of my own, some of them written, I verily believe, when I was twelve years old! "Oh, the pity of it, Iago, the pity of it." I have a particular reason for satisfaction that you have been going lately a rapid round of London dissipations. I don't believe at all in the truth of the much-praised verse, that

> "Es bildet ein Talent sich in der stille
> Sich ein Charakter in dem Strom der Welt."

Quite the contrary. Social attrition sharpens men's wits, but destroys the natural contour of their characters. And we call a stone "polished" when, carried along (and generally *downward*) by the current, with no will of its own, it has, by continuous contact with other stones, lost all its natural angles. But this I do devoutly believe, that no man is a complete *man* who is *only* a complete thinking, or reading, or writing machine. Poets, publicists, and preachers, who have no personal experience, no sensible point of contact with, the actual world as it is, are in my estimation only second-rate poets, publicists, and thinkers, however transcendent may be their intellectual faculty or assimilated culture. For

any man of robust moral fibre and unlimited intellectual receptivity, I am convinced that occasional close contact with (or immersion in) the central movement of that world, mean and shallow though it be, is essential, not perhaps to the development, but to the adjustment of his faculties. My belief is that all first-class genius has in it an element of vulgarity, if you will—but certainly of amalgamation with the common sense, and common experience and sentiment, of commonplace human beings —a fulcrum for its indiviuality in what is generally appreciable. Shakespeare had it; Milton too, in spite of all the narrowness of his sublimity; Dante, in spite of all his egotism; and Byron and Goethe and Voltaire—and this constitutes their immeasurable superiority in the hierarchy of genius over such geniuses as Keats and Shelley and Wordsworth and Tennyson and Rousseau.

To this Mr. Morley replied:—

Your last letter was a real delight to me, first because it was a letter, and not one of those shabby scraps in which we moderns hail one another; second, because it put into the language of poet, philosopher, and man of common sense, the kind of protest for my dissipation of which I was inarticulately conscious. But it is very difficult, my dear Lytton, this being in the world and not of it. It really seems as if progress were only effectively furthered by men with one eye, and that not a very true seeing one; or at any rate by men who consent or delight to wear a huge pair of blinkers.

To Mr. John Morley. *Cintra, August* 27, 1875.

The sun and the Court between them have inspired our little world here with a mad passion for picnics, and during the last fortnight Cintra has been like the valley of Rasselas; and all its folk busily engaged in the search after happiness; a search, on the whole, perhaps

less insane at Cintra than elsewhere; but still, as elsewhere, fatiguing. Last week I gave to the king's father, Don Fernando, a sort of *fête champêtre*, which cost me a good deal of trouble and no small amount of money, but which passed off very successfully. It consisted of a hot dinner for twenty covers *al fresco* on an apparently inaccessible and picturesque part of the sea-coast, about seven or eight miles from Cintra, with music, fireworks, torches, and moonlight "by express command." Our party did not get back to Cintra till past two in the morning. The thing was a *tour de force*, and nobody here would believe that it could be done, as the bay in question, an iron-bound coast, shut in on all sides by precipitous rocks, can only be reached *à dos d'âne*, and that with difficulty. But I had sent to the spot carpenters, cooks, utensils, and provisions (even grates, stoves, and fuel) on the previous day. And by camping on the shore overnight, my pioneers succeeded in converting one of the many caves with which the rocks there are honeycombed into a complete kitchen. Next morning I woke and found myself famous, Sir—the Columbus of Cintra. Those who had derided the enterprise as an instance of British insanity were eager to imitate it. The Queen was the first to try, but Her Majesty's picnic, though attempted under easier conditions, was a failure. To-morrow the Don gives us a return picnic at the Cork Convent, and the empty cell of Honorius will be desecrated by the barbarous dissonance of Bacchus and his crew. Pardon this absurd chronicle. 'Tis the only news which Cintra affords.

Mr. Wilfrid Blunt had this year published his first volume of poems under the title of *Sonnets and Songs by Proteus*. Lord Lytton was anxious to review them,[1] and wrote to Mr. Morley for space in the *Fortnightly*. The editor, in gladly granting

[1] This review appeared in the August number of the *Fortnightly*, 1875.

this petition, confessed himself no admirer of Proteus's muse. "It neither teaches, nor inspires, nor charms."

In answer to this the elder poet wrote :—

To Mr. John Morley. *August* 27, 1875.

I sincerely and strongly feel that Proteus is a genuine poet—within limits, I admit, which are at present narrow ones, and which perhaps he may never enlarge. But no critic can estimate the potential greatness of the smallest genuine poet. Who could have guessed what Byron was capable of when he wrote the "Hours of Idleness"? . . . So far as Proteus belongs to any particular school of verse that is known to me, 'tis a school that I particularly dislike. Nevertheless, I have said nothing in praise of his little book which I do not most honestly think. He has, *me judice*, a really fine poetic style (something very different from the poetic vocabulary so commonly called style). His mind is not manly, but his style is—or seems to me to be so—and, whilst entirely free from the frequent slipshod and redundancy which deface so much of my own verse, it is refreshingly free from the (to me) intolerable affectation of Swinburne, Morris, Rossetti, as well as the ingrained vulgarity of Browning. He sends me a letter from Henry Taylor, who says to him, "If to be thoughtful and supremely poetical were to be great, I should think that your poetry would have claim to be called so. In my estimation what it wants is wisdom. But perhaps you don't care to be wise." This opinion seems to be much the same as my own, only nowadays wisdom is also a cant word. But enough of Proteus. I think he has gifts which merit better recognition, and a chance of employing them better. But many are called and few are chosen; and at every cross-road there is sure to be some young Hercules who remains there for the

rest of his life. Even our demigods are demi-failures. But behold the spirit descendeth upon me; and the lips of thy servant are opened, and thus he addresseth the gods:—

> You that walk through the crowd
> Looking so like great men,
> Crying, like Cæsar, aloud,
> "Veni, Vidi!"—What then?
> Why break off half-way
> When the phrase was so nearly complete?
> Yet a word is still wanting.—Say,
> Were you *really* obliged to retreat?

M. Klaczko's series of articles on the two Chancellors, Bismarck and Gortschakoff, had lately appeared in the *Revue des deux Mondes*. Lord Lytton read them with profound admiration. He writes to Mr. Morley of them:—

"By Jove, how clever they are! His style is wonderful. But the best French style is only the style common to the best French authors. Can you suggest an explanation or even a definition of that mysterious something in writing which we call style? It has often puzzled me sorely. It is something quite different from vocabulary; and it is certainly not mannerism. Most modern poets have a marked manner of their own; but none of them have any style. And indeed very few poets have ever had any style. Goldsmith's great individuality is in his *style;* and his style is singularly charming, although his vocabulary is poor, and both his ideas and his form somewhat commonplace. Shakespeare and Milton have style. So has Byron. Shelley has none, though he is free from the mannerism which in Keats replaces style. It was all very well for Buffon to say *le style c'est l'homme*. For Buffon has a beautiful style; and it was his interest to make that saying current. But the saying is certainly not accurate. Heine illustrated its inaccuracy by observing that Ville-

main's style was polished and graceful. Machiavelli, who loved freedom, has embarrassed all honest psychologists by the style of his Prince; and in their bewilderment they have asserted it to be a political satire. One must discriminate between what is beautiful and what is characteristic in style. It is possible to write beautifully without having any style at all, and to have a style without writing beautifully. In fact, the impress of a strong individuality excludes beauty from an author's manner; just as a face with prominently marked features is seldom a beautiful face; and a man of salient character is seldom a perfectly pleasing person. I suspect that a writer's style depends more on his character than on his intellect; on his moral rather than on his æsthetic perception of life. Cicero writes excellently well; but he has no style. He was a man without character. Tacitus and Caesar have, each of them, a style. French writers cannot possibly have a style, *because their language has one.* If a man writes in French, he must either write as all the good French authors write, or else write badly. You will say that between the style of Rousseau and that of Voltaire there is a marked difference. Yes, but only so long as the two writers *think* differently. Whenever they *think* alike, they write alike, and their style is the same. The German and English languages have fortunately no style; but neither German nor English writers take sufficient advantage of the freedom which their literary individuality owes to this fact, though some few, like Carlyle, shockingly abuse that freedom. Indeed it seems to me the fate of freedom to be made disgusting by those who exercise it. Yet surely the neglect of style is a defect in a national literature. For expression shapes thought; words may be worthless cockleshells; yet they are the only receptacles in which ideas, like pearls, can deposit themselves. Words are the shells of ideas. But there are no new ideas, and in all probability never will be any new ideas in the world. The intellectually rich differs from the intellectually poor writer, by the superior

susceptibility with which he apprehends and appropriates to himself (re-casting them in his own individuality) ideas which already exist in the world, but which the world has not yet utilised, or even apprehended. The human mind, when the sphere of its activity is about to be enlarged, must undergo an extraordinary perturbation. The greatest revolution through which humanity has yet passed was, I suppose, Christianity. Yet the human mind has certainly not gained from Christianity any ideas unknown to the Ancients. Christianity has only enlarged the domain of certain ideas. My dear father used to say to me, 'Do you want to get at new ideas? read old books; do you want to find old ideas? read new books.' But I take it that the truest literary originality consists of giving new form to old ideas. Throughout nature the vital principle (pardon this metaphysical fiction) is the same in all. But one animal differs from another in the hierarchy of Being by its peculiarity of form. Gad, sir! I have an idea myself that, without meaning it, I have written you a *Fortnightly* essay; and one which is quite priggish enough to pass muster in any of our intellectual reviews. Peccavi! Talking of prigs, I shall be delighted to make acquaintance with the friend mentioned in your letter, or any other friend of yours. 'I love them, that loves them, that loves you,' as the housemaid said to the footman. But this particular friend has not yet turned up in these diggings. Our picnic at the Cork Convent passed off very pleasantly. I was put to sit next to the Queen, and asked to write some verses on Her Majesty. My first impulse was to reply, 'Votre Majesté n'est pas un sujet.' But I had presence of mind enough to suppress that *mauvaise plaisanterie*, and to reply, 'Ou n'écrit pas des poésies sur les poêmes, votre Majesté en est un.' This *fade* idiotic compliment was mistaken for a *mot;* and, like all things *fade* and idiotic in this most idiotic and insipid of worlds, was a mighty success. In fact it has made my social reputation for the next week—at least. *Addio! Addio!*

You ask for letters. If I send you many more like the present, 'curst with a granted prayer,' you will grow more moderate in your demands. Do not, however, grow less generous in your gifts, and believe, dear Morley, in the unfailing gratitude of their recipient.—Your ever affectionate LYTTON."

Mr. Morley's biography of Diderot was coming out in monthly chapters in the *Fortnightly Review*. The following letter was written after reading the chapter on the *Encyclopedia* which appeared in the September number of 1875:—

To MR. JOHN MORLEY. *Cintra, September* 9, 1875.

DEAREST MORLEY,—I am crippled with rheumatism, and can barely hold a pen; but I must tell you at once how *delighted* I have been by your admirable chapter on the *Encyclopedia*. It is intensely interesting, full of details which are to me quite new, and some of them singularly touching. What I have always most admired in the literary intellect of the French eighteenth century, and what your series of masterly excavations into the inmost mind of its best men bring very appreciably before one, is the thoroughly *cosmical* character of it. Is it not what my friend Don Fernando calls "incredítable" that a century after the *Encyclopedia*, a man like Maurice should in England have obtained general recognition as a thinker, and that to this hour it should be a sign of intellectual freedom and light to spend time in seriously discussing the doctrine of eternal punishment. From Coleridge the Great to Kingsley the Little, how poor, thin, and dribbling is the most influential current of purely English and unborrowed thought. I suspect the Puritans have done us quite incalculable mischief. But for them the stream might have flowed calmly and

broadly forward in the direction given it by Thomas More, and England at this day, however fallen in the political world, would have been living an intellectual life far above that of Germany. Be the cause what it may, however, our tendency has, with a few rare interruptions, for centuries been to stick to the little side of great things. In science as in religion, in religion as in politics, in politics as in society, we are now more than ever, and, to all appearances, hopelessly local and parochial.

Your last chapter is full of noble epigrams, a whole social philosophy in the small change of current coin, with your own image stamped on it. That seems to me the highest and most satisfactory success to which any writer can attain.

So passed this year away in much poetry-making, much reading and thinking, in building castles in the air about the return to Knebworth with a fortune made, in communing with friends, in picnics with kings and queens by moonlight on the seashore. In October the family removed from Cintra to the Lisbon Legation, which was just completed, and over the last touches of which the Minister himself "plied hammer and paint brush." There Mr. Morley was to join them in the spring, and this visit was eagerly anticipated, and longingly talked of. His official career, Lord Lytton hoped and believed, was drawing to a close. His future was filled with dreams of fame as a man of letters, writing from the privacy of his own fireside. He neither desired nor expected any higher public position in the service of his country.

Suddenly, on the last day of November, a letter came, which, in the twinkling of an eye, changed the whole plan of his life, and shattered all these dreams.

MR. DISRAELI *to* LORD LYTTON.

Confidential.]

2 WHITEHALL GARDENS, S.W.
November 23, 1875.

MY DEAR LYTTON,—Lord Northbrook has resigned the Viceroyalty of India—for purely domestic reasons—and will return to England in the spring. If you be willing, I will submit your name to the Queen as his successor.

The critical state of affairs in Central Asia demands a statesman, and, I believe, if you will accept this high post, you will have an opportunity, not only of serving your country, but of obtaining an enduring fame.—Yours sincerely, B. DISRAELI.

TO LORD LYTTON.

To this letter Lord Lytton replied:—

LORD LYTTON *to* MR. DISRAELI.

Private and Confidential.]

LISBON, *November* 1875.

MY DEAR MR. DISRAELI,—No man was ever so greatly or surprisingly honoured as I am by your splendid offer, nor could any man possibly feel prouder than I do of an honour so unprecedented, or more deeply anxious to deserve it.

But I should ill requite your generous confidence were I to accept the magnificent and supremely important post for which you are willing to recommend me to the Queen, without first submitting to your most serious consideration a circumstance which cannot be already known to you, and in which you will probably recognise a paramount disqualification.

Your much more than flattering letter, and the overwhelming sense of responsibility under which I answer it, entirely exclude all the commonplaces of self-depreciation. I am bound to assume that my absolute ignorance of every fact and question concerning India, as well as my *total want* of experience in every kind of *administrative* business, have been fully weighed, in your impartial and penetrative judgment, against other considerations unknown to me and beyond the province of my opinion.

But it occurs to me that to counteract all such deficiencies you may have reckoned on my enjoyment of that sound health and physical stamina which are common to men of my age, and which would be needed to sustain official labour more arduous and anxious in my case than in that of a man better prepared for it by previous knowledge and experience.

I therefore feel bound by every sentiment of loyalty and duty to let you know that I have for many years been suffering from a complaint, of which I can expect no radical cure, and which, though not dangerous, is sometimes extremely painful, enfeebling, and depressing. Experience convinces me that this complaint is liable to be acutely aggravated by any great anxiety, and occasionally, indeed, it incapacitates me altogether for the most ordinary mental labour.

In my present profession, which is one of irregular work and light responsibility, I feel this to be no practical hindrance to my efficiency as a public servant. Nor is there any diplomatic post, however arduous, which I could not undertake with full reliance on my own powers. But when, in reference to Madras,[1] I consulted a very eminent surgeon, who, having long treated me for it, was well acquainted with my constitution, he solemnly warned me that constitutions subject to this

[1] He had the previous year been offered and declined the post of Governor of Madras.

complaint are of all others the worst fitted for life and work in India.

I had then no occasion to regard that warning, as other considerations (of which you are aware) compelled me to decline the appointment. I do not now recall it in connection with any private or personal considerations, and I assure you most earnestly that if, with the certainty of leaving my life behind me in India, I had a reasonable chance of also leaving there a reputation comparable to Lord Mayo's, I would still, without a moment's hesitation, embrace the high destiny you place within my grasp. But the gratitude, industry, and *will* which must help me to compensate all my other deficiences, afford no guarantee against this physical difficulty. I am persuaded that you will not misunderstand the hesitation and anxiety it causes me.

But the possible effect upon great imperial interests of any failure in the health and strength of one to whose hands you would otherwise be disposed to entrust the administration of those interests, is a question so serious that I have no choice but to submit it frankly to your experienced judgment.

It must, under the most favourable conditions, be some time before I could master all the details of work entirely new to me, or safely exercise an independent judgment on questions wholly beyond the range of all my previous experience.

If in connection with this fact I presume to allude to the surprised and hostile comments which will, of course, be provoked by the unprecedented honour you are willing to confer on me, it is only to express my grateful appreciation of your courageous and generous indifference to that consideration.

But were my health unavoidably to break down before I had time to justify your choice, and perhaps at some critical moment, thereby subjecting you to the grievous inconvenience of having suddenly to transfer the Viceroyalty to stronger hands, should I not have injured

instead of serving the Minister to whom I am bound by every tie of personal gratitude and inherited regard?

If there be reasons unknown to me, which, upon *purely* public grounds (the only ones I would wish or ask you to consider) still dispose you to incur such a risk, an intimation from you to that effect will relieve me from all hesitation.

In that case, and in that case only, I shall regard your letter, not as an offer which I can decline compatibly with my intense appreciation of the undeserved honour it involves, but as a high and glorious command which it would be a dereliction of duty to disobey.

I feel that in such a case I might rely upon your kind indulgence for deficiencies deeply felt and honestly avowed, and with the profoundly grateful assurance that my utmost efforts would be unceasingly devoted to repair and correct those deficiencies, I beg you, dear Mr. Disraeli, to believe me, your lastingly obliged and faithful

LYTTON.

The Rt. Hon. B. DISRAELI, M.P.,
&c. &c. &c.

The answer was telegraphed on the 20th of December.

MR. DISRAELI *to* LORD LYTTON.

HATFIELD, *December* 20, 1875.

We have carefully considered your letter, and have not changed our opinion. We regard the matter as settled, but it must be secret until you hear from me.

The first friend to whom this momentous piece of news was confided was John Forster.

To JOHN FORSTER. *December* 1875.

You will share my conviction that I could not, as an honest man, have placed the question of health more plainly unreservedly, and forcibly than I did place it before the Cabinet, and that having done this I could not, as an English gentleman and a public servant, refuse to undertake the arduous duties of this great office, if the offer of it were then, upon public grounds, solemnly renewed with full knowledge of all these disqualifications, which appeared to myself overwhelming. After the most anxious, prolonged, and, I may say, torturing self-examination, my conscience remains quite clear and calm on this point. And whatever the fate now before me, I shall always feel that up to the present moment I have neither rashly courted nor selfishly shirked it. But, oh, the heavy change—the *awful* change! You cannot doubt what is uppermost in my heart as I write this letter, nor how my heart is bleeding and aching.

What thoughts of *you*, what thoughts of all that is cherished, beautiful, and pleasant in the life I had laid out for myself, and to which I must now bid a temporary farewell. All I dare say now and here is this: You will deem perhaps that my judgment has erred in the decision I was obliged to take suddenly, quickly, and without the possibility of advice from any quarter except my dear, brave, honoured wife; but if you feel that this decision is not liable to any *moral* reproach, and that my conduct in accepting a post which older and abler men than myself might fairly regard as the goal of their highest ambition, has been free from every selfish motive and unworthy desire, then, oh friend of my life, by all the years of love between us, and by all that is charitable, do not, I conjure you, aggravate by reproaches which will break my heart, the heavy weight of the solemn burden I have accepted and must now bear manfully.

On the 7th of January 1876 Lord Lytton received the following telegram from Lord Salisbury, then Secretary of State for India at the India Office:—

MARQUESS OF SALISBURY *to* LORD LYTTON.

January 7, 1876.

Announcement of your appointment has been officially made and well received.

Very important that you should come home *soon*, as many preparations to be made and much business to be transacted.

Lord Northbrook very anxious to know when you will be in Calcutta? Can you say?

INDIA OFFICE.

Lord Lytton prepared to quit Lisbon at once, leaving his wife and children to follow him as soon as was possible, and undertook to be ready to sail for India by the 1st of March.

To John Morley he writes on the 9th January:—

Our happy Cintra project is broken, and for me *die schönen Tage in Aranjuez sind jetzt vorüber*. I suppose I must suppress the *Poppy*. It won't do for a Viceroy to cut jokes about Government in public. Othello's occupation's gone. . . . I hear we may have to separate from the children, but still hope to be spared that sacrifice. Every sacrifice, however, I am prepared to face. I have the courage of the coward in front of battle, and shall march on with unflinching step. There is, I know, a ludicrous side in all this business which will probably strike you, but the tragic side is so deep and solemn that I confidently reckon on your true sympathy and serious good wishes.

By his official and private friends in Portugal, where he had been so affectionately remembered and so warmly welcomed back, the news was received with universal sorrow.

"How could I ever believe we should lose you so soon," writes the old King Don Fernando to him, "and see you cast so far away from all those that cherish and honour you? . . . I shall never, never forget you."

An old man-servant who had waited on them in the earlier Cintra days, and who had returned to them on their return to Portugal, died as he bent sobbing over the large packing-cases that were signs of their departure.

When Lord Lytton sailed away the American vessels paid him the tribute of manning their rigging for him as his ship left the Tagus.

He found time before he reached England to read through Hunter's *Annals of Rural Bengal*, and all the Indian Blue Books which Lord George Hamilton had sent him.

The appointment was received with general favour by the Press and public. "I have from Delane[1] a singularly kind and flattering letter about it. I need not say that the promised support of the *Times* is a tower of strength."

After interviews with his friends of the Cabinet, Disraeli, Lord Salisbury, and Lord Carnarvon, he writes: "The work is overwhelming and most puzzling and strange to me, but intensely interesting."

To LADY LYTTON, *from* JOHN FORSTER. *January* 2, 1876.

The principal object of these few lines is to ask the dearest Edith what on earth she has sent us by the

[1] Editor of the *Times*.

Lively—not my old, young, lifelong friend, with stories as of Apollo himself, new lighted on a Heaven-Kissing Gate of Palaces,[1] but, shall I say it in plain language, a Blue Book. But that the edges are yet uncut I'd never have known it for the Robert, *toi que j'aime*. And of course when he's bound with gold leaves and in vice-royal magnificence, I shall not even know what's left of him. Well, dearest friends, we must be content as we can be, talk no more poetry, smoke no more cigarettes, but live "August! upon a Peak in India!" God bless you.

This was the last letter ever written to them by this faithful friend. Mr. Forster had been ill for many months past, and did not long survive the news of his friend's new honours, and by the time Lady Lytton reached England he was dead. To Lord Lytton, at such a moment, this loss was heart-breaking.

To Mrs. C. W. Earle.

I feel quite crushed and bewildered. All my little courage is gone. He was father, brother, and more, much more, to me. No man ever *had* such a friend as I had in him. If it were not for Edith and the little ones, my longing would be to lie down where they will lay him—under the earth. I find I am executor to his will, and I must do all I can to help and comfort the poor little wife, who seems to me so forlorn—and most of my private affairs were in those wise and loyal hands of his —now dead. This puts a double load on me, and I know not how to bear it. I ought to have been prepared, but I was not. I now know for the first time from Quain that all was hopeless long ago. What an awful mystery it all is.

[1] Palace Gate House, Kensington, John Forster's London residence.

The death of John Forster added to the sense that in entering upon his new responsibilities he was cut off from all his old life, but side by side with this sorrow over the loss of an old friend came in support and consolation the gain of a new one. Each period of Lord Lytton's life seems to have been connected with some very special and intimate friendship, and the period of his Indian Viceroyalty can never be dissociated from the friendship formed on the eve of his departure with Mr. FitzJames Stephen. They first met at a dinner at Lady Arthur Russell's and walked away together to spend the rest of the evening at the Cosmopolitan Club. India was of course the subject of their talk. Lytton was not more eager to hear than Stephen to tell all that he knew of the conditions of that great empire. They left the club together, but did not part till they had spent half the night walking each other home, too absorbed in their subject to feel fatigue or the wish to separate. Mr. Stephen's knowledge and experience of India were the fruit of three years' residence there,[1] and his views were so interesting to the new Viceroy that he begged to have some recorded expression of them. Stephen went home and wrote for him a pamphlet on the Indian administrative system which Lytton compared to "a policeman's bull's-eye," and said that it had given him "the master-key to the magnificent mystery of Indian administration." From the time Lord Lytton sailed for India till the day of his return four years later, Mr. FitzJames Stephen wrote to him by every mail. Those letters were to Lord Lytton, to quote his own words, "the chief among the greatest comforts and enjoyments of his not very comfortable and enjoyable life in India." If not quite so regular on his side of the correspondence, nevertheless he found

[1] Mr. Stephen was legal member of Council in India from 1869 to 1872.

time to answer Stephen's letters constantly and at great length. One of these letters, written in the thick of the second Afghan war and during a railway journey, covered thirty sheets of foolscap, "with only two slips of the pen," as Stephen commented, "in a hand-writing which fills me with hopeless admiration, and in a style which cannot be equalled by any journalist in England." Their personal intercourse was renewed when Lord Lytton returned to England, and the friendship so rapidly made lasted till the end of his life.

END OF VOL. I.

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